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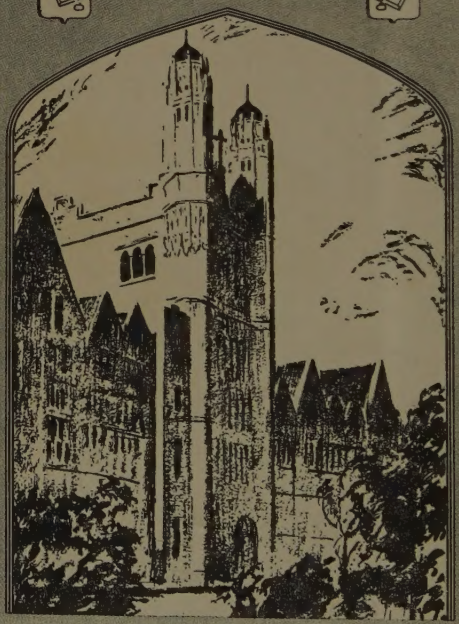

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GUIDE TO GREEK TRAGEDY

A GUIDE

TO

GREEK TRAGEDY

FOR ENGLISH READERS

BY

LEWIS CAMPBELL, M.A., LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS
AUTHOR OF 'AESCHYLUS IN ENGLISH VERSE'
'SOPHOCLES IN ENGLISH VERSE,' ETC.

NEW YORK: G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
LONDON: PERCIVAL & CO.
1891

PREFACE

THE present volume does not profess to be a repertory of facts and theories respecting the Greek Drama. For such results of learned and archæological research I would confidently refer the reader to Haigh's *Attic Theatre*, or, if a German scholar, to A. Müller's *Bühnenalterthümer*, and to the books there cited. My hope has been that by recording impressions made on myself by somewhat close and long-continued study of the originals, I might assist the reader of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, whether in Greek or English, to enter more completely into the spirit and intention of their works.

Greek tragedy, as an interpretation of human life, contains much which the world cannot afford to lose. It carries an imperfect lesson relative to a transitional age, yet one that is of lasting import, and inseparable from the vehicle of dramatic art in which it is couched. To render

Aeschylus and Sophocles, and, in part, Euripides, more accessible to the countrymen of Shakespeare is, I trust, at least a respectable endeavour.

This little book is meant to be used as a companion volume to *Sophocles in English Verse* (1883) and *Aeschylus in English Verse* (1891), published by Kegan Paul and Co. I have therefore quoted very sparingly from either. Nor have I availed myself to a much greater extent of the permission of Macmillan and Co. and the Messrs. Black to repeat statements formerly made in "Green's Classical Writers" (*Sophocles*) and the *Ency. Brit.* (art. *Sophocles*), where I have treated more fully of the central figure in the immortal group of Athenian tragic poets than was possible within the limits here allotted to me.

LEWIS CAMPBELL.

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CHAPTER I

WHAT IS TRAGEDY?[1]

THE purpose of this book is to afford some assistance to those who desire to obtain a real hold—whether in studying the originals or by reading translations—of the chief masterpieces of Greek Tragedy, considered as a great and important phase of human culture.

As a preliminary step, before entering on a nearer scrutiny, it is well to endeavour to form a general conception of the phenomenon, of which one part is here to be described. Such an endeavour must largely be guided by light derived from experience and tradition, and even when the result has been formulated, it may have to be subsequently modified so as to be brought into closer harmony with fact.

[1] Books to consult: Aristotle's *Poetics*; Lessing's *Dramaturgie* (*Dramatic Notes*, in Bohn's Series); Hegel's *Aesthetic*; Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*, Eng. Trans. vol. iii. c. 37; Dryden's Prose Writings.

There is a widespread notion that the theatre is for amusement, and to have the feelings harrowed is not to be amused. "Why see, or hear, or read, what makes one wretched?" is often said when any serious work of fiction or dramatic art is spoken of. "There is so much that is painful in actual life that we do not care to have it pressed upon us in our moments of recreation." The Athenians also, as we shall find, did not choose to be reminded too pointedly of their own sorrows, and there are tragedies which either from defective art[1] or from a mistaken realism lie justly open to such an objection. The great artist, however, knows the secret of avoiding this. Sir Walter Scott, when his humble friend Laidlaw had buried one of his children, wrote as follows the same evening in his diary:—

"I saw the poor child's funeral from a distance. Ah, that Distance! What a magician for conjuring up scenes of joy or sorrow, smoothing all asperities, reconciling all incongruities, veiling all absurdness, softening every coarseness, doubling every effect by the influence of the imagination. A Scottish wedding should be seen at a distance; the gay band of the dancers just distinguished amid the elderly group of the spectators—the glass held high, and the distant cheers as it is swallowed, should be only a sketch, not a finished

[1] As in Godwin's *Antonio*. See *Essays of Elia*.

Dutch picture, when it becomes brutal and boorish. Scottish psalmody, too, should be heard from a distance. The grunt and the snuffle, and the whine and the scream, should be all blended in that deep and distant sound, which, rising and falling like the Aeolian harp, may have some title to be called the praise of our Maker. Even so the distant funeral, the few mourners on horseback, with their plaids wrapped around them — the father heading the procession as they enter the river, and pointing out the ford by which his darling is to be carried on the last long road— not one of the subordinate figures in discord with the general tone of the incident—seeming just accessories and no more—this is affecting."[1]

And it is not under the immediate stress of grief that men are commonly in the mood for seeking strength and comfort in the contemplation of an ideal sorrow. The "odd tricks," that Enobarbus speaks of, "which sorrow shoots out of the mind"[2] are as various as the constitutions of human beings. Thus President Lincoln, when cast down on witnessing the horrors of one of the earlier battlefields in the American Civil War, is said to have called for a comic song.

Nor is it by persons of an ascetic or gloomy cast of mind that great tragedy has been either

[1] Scott's *Journal*, i. 172. Also in Lockhart's *Life of Scott*.
[2] Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

written or enjoyed. The concluding lines of Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" express the truth in this regard—

> In the very temple of Delight
> Veiled Melancholy hath her secret shrine,
> Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
> Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine ;
> His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
> And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

The starting-point for our inquiry is the unquestioned fact that tragic representations do give intense and deep delight. And the central problem is to account for the peculiar pleasure (Aristotle's *οἰκεία ἡδονή*) which was realised in different ways by the Athenian citizens collectively in the age of Pericles, and in the age of Elizabeth by the whole English people—which still makes itself inevitably and supremely felt whenever a Betterton, a Garrick, a Kemble, or a Salvini fills the modern stage.

Plato (*Phileb.* 48 A) refers to it but does not analyse it, and fails to distinguish it from the mere indulgence of grief.[1]

Aristotle's famous definition of tragic poetry was thus rendered into English by John Dryden :—

"Tragedy is an imitation of one entire, great, and probable action, not told but represented,

[1] Homer's *Iliad*, xxiii. 98 ; *Odyssey*, iv. 198.

which, by moving in us fear and pity, is conducive to the purging of those two passions in our minds."

Milton's reference to this passage must not be omitted :[1]—

"Tragedy, as it was anciently conceived, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems; therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such-like passions, that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated."

Aristotle's pregnant saying, however, is not only extremely condensed, but so oracular, that every clause in it, especially that on which Milton dwells, has been the subject of prolonged discussion and elaborate commentary; and it is therefore allowable to try a more diffuse and less technical method.

Looking first, in the Socratic manner, at those great works which all will at once admit to be tragedies *par excellence*—the *Agamemnon*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Medea*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*—let us attempt to generalise their common characteristics. A tragedy is a drama in which the spectator is made to feel poignantly the sadness of life, but in

[1] "Of that Sort of Dramatic Poem which is called Tragedy" (prefixed to *Samson Agonistes*).

such a way as to give satisfaction by the beauty and grandeur of the presentation, and by awakening not only horror and compassion but some more intimate mode of admiration and sympathy. The subject chosen must have some quality calculated to rouse the imagination of those before whom the work is to be produced, and the treatment of it must be such as to leave an impression of greatness and nobility. The pleasure so conveyed may be undefinable, but it seems to arise through the consciousness of emotional powers, unaccompanied by the pain which attends them when called forth by actual misfortune. Those who have not suffered are pleased to know from afar off that they are capable of suffering. Those who have suffered are soothed by the presence of an ideal sympathy, by finding that they are not alone, and that there is a mind which probes their sufferings. And some whose wounds are ready to bleed afresh, so that they cannot speak of them, feel untold relief, as in the privacy of a great assembly, under the shadow of an imagined sorrow, they are not ashamed to mingle their tears with those of their fellows, even as the maidens lamented for Patroclus, each thinking of her particular loss.[1]

All are made conscious of the enlargement of

[1] *Iliad*, xix. 262: Πάτροκλον πρόφασιν, σφῶν δ' αὐτῶν κήδε' ἑκάστη. "Each her own grief, Patroclus the excuse."

our common nature which comes through the experience and the contemplation of suffering—

> Small rebuked by large,
> We felt our puny hates refine to air,
> Our prides as poor prevent the humbling hand,
> Our petty passion purify its tide.[1]

Thus by the magic of a great poet's art, made audible and visible, the mind's finer sympathies are unlocked from their obscure recesses, imagination is expanded, and thought is drawn forth to dwell on some far-reaching aspect of human experience.

According to one acceptation of Aristotle's famous apophthegm—the feelings thus called forth are also relieved of their excess, or purified of their dross. In other words, emotion is refined by being "touched" with thought.[2] And what is aimed at both by the author and the spectator of a tragedy is not excitement but sympathetic expression.

This is done by means of dramatic presentation; or, as Aristotle says, the action is "not told but represented."[3] As Milton has it, tragedy is a "sort of dramatic poem."

At this point it becomes necessary to clear away a doubt and a misapprehension.

[1] R. Browning's *Aristophanes' Apology*, p. 10.

[2] As Matthew Arnold said that religion was thought touched with emotion.

[3] δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας.

1. A tragedy, in the sense here understood, is a species of drama. It is not a story but a play, two things which, be it never forgotten, are essentially distinct. And yet one may speak without impropriety of a "tragic history." Just as Aristotle, with Plato, acknowledged the kinship of tragedy to epic poetry, so if we left out of sight the condition of representation (which determines the form) we might include tragedy and serious fiction under one idea. When so regarded, such works as the *Bride of Lammermoor* and *Kenilworth* and the *Master of Ballantrae* partake essentially of the nature of tragic art. The reader derives from them a pleasure which is the same in kind; they have the same power of purifying the emotions, and they are the outcome of a kindred contemplation of human life regarded as a whole in the light of sad experiences.

The truth would seem to be that different ages have provided various expedients for supplying the same mental need. Although the greatest tragedies can never lose their power, their place is partially supplied at the present day by music, by the higher fiction, or by religious ritual, including sermons. None of these, however, have the peculiar stamp and flavour of dramatic art. And when Plato in the tenth book of the *Republic* and elsewhere spoke of Homer as the prince of tragic

poets, he showed indeed his usual power of generalising and of seeing resemblances between things ordinarily kept apart,—but he also betrayed the spirit of a time in which by cultivated persons both epic and dramatic poetry were more often read than heard or seen. For the interest with which men listened to an Homeric rhapsody was different from what they felt in the Dionysiac theatre. And not less different is the sustained energy required for the production of an epic poem from the concentrated intensity, hardly less rare, which goes along with successful tragic creation, an intensity not directly supported by feeling, as in lyric poetry, but accompanying a free act of the imagination.

2. The essential point of dramatic effect is its immediacy. The spectator is brought face to face with an action that is ideally portrayed. But what is meant by *action* here? The literal meaning of drama is "a thing done," and many persons seem to think that a scene is undramatic in which something is not *done* before their eyes. They judge of the dramatic quality of a piece by the amount of incident, or by the spectacular effect. This is the "misapprehension" above spoken of. Not to press the suggestion of a French critic,[1] that according to this way of viewing the matter the pantomime is the most dramatic of productions,

[1] M. Paul Stapfer.

it is enough to show how a single scene in *Macbeth* would have to be remodelled in order to square with such a theory. After a certain exit of Macbeth, Duncan should be discovered in his chamber fast asleep, his murderer bending over him. The snoring of the grooms should be distinctly heard. Instead of conversing with an "air-drawn dagger," Macbeth should wield his dirk with manifest effect. Then a voice should ring through the house—"Macbeth doth murder sleep. Macbeth shall sleep no more." This would be "immediacy" with a vengeance![1] And yet that which the spectator most wants to know would remain hidden from him, except so far as indicated through the facial expression of the actor who personated Macbeth. What is passing in the mind of the assassin? What differentiates him from ordinary criminals? What part has Lady Macbeth in the affair? What is due to "supernatural soliciting"? In other words, what is the nature of the action as a whole?

This example may serve to bring home the important truth that by the "immediacy" of dramatic presentation is not meant merely that something is continually being done or suffered under the spectator's eye, but that the chief agent is present before him at the very crisis of the

[1] On the demand for *incident*, as a peculiarity of the English theatre, see A. H. Ward in *Ency. Brit.* vol. vii. p. 430 A.

action taken as a whole—including in "the action" all that is working together towards the main result—motives, influences, impulsions, etc.—and the impressions produced on the minds of all who are chiefly concerned. In drama as thus conceived spectacular effect (ὄψις) has only a subordinate part, which rather tends to diminish as the imagination of an audience is more cultivated, and as the purely "dramatic" motive is intensified. Thus the *Choëphoroe* is more dramatic and less spectacular than the *Eumenides* or the *Supplices*—Sophocles than Aeschylus—the *Medea* than the *Troades* of Euripides. The soliloquies of Hamlet and Macbeth are more essential to the action than the fencing matches (whether of rapier or broadsword) with Laertes and Macduff.

Another point, which is expressly noticed by Aristotle, now becomes clear. It is through *language* that the truth of a situation is presented and the sympathies of the audience conciliated. And it is in the rendering of speech, as given to him by the poet, that the art of the actor mainly consists—the characteristic difference being that the language is spoken and not read, and that while spoken it is acted as well, *i.e.* the character is impersonated so that eye and ear, voice, gesture, physiognomy together convey a concrete and

objective impression to the collective mind of those assembled at the performance of the play. The very grandeur of a tragic action often makes it impossible that the whole of it should be brought immediately before the eye. And if it could, the shock so produced would be essentially different from the combined effect of pity and awe which is the medium through which the pleasure of tragedy is conveyed. Events of the greatest moment may happen far away from the central scene, and can then only be made known by narrative. In some of the noblest tragedies the use of narrative is all-pervading.

Granting, then, that motive is the most important element of "action," and that the spectator's sympathies are to be awakened through the language by which motives are revealed, we may return to the main point, and again insist, without fear of being misunderstood, that the great effects of tragedy are produced through *action*. The spectator must be led to imagine himself as witnessing the main crisis in some great life. This has not been equally achieved by all great tragedians, with whose work the epic, lyric, and rhetorical elements have mingled in different quantities. But it is a characteristic of those who have most completely realised the dramatic spirit that every speech is also a step in the action, which moves forward almost with every line. It

has accordingly been remarked that the drama is the most perfect form of poetry, because it approaches most nearly to the concrete unity of statuary. It is not an imitation or reflection merely (as the ancients thought), but a new creation modelled after the old; not a series of thoughts and images, but a "life within a life," as De Quincey says. This remark is valuable, in so far as it designates tragedy the supreme effort of imagination, in which poetry approaches most nearly to ideal reality, and which combines all the elements of poetry in an organic whole. But it should not blind us to the greater vividness and freedom of the drama as compared with sculpture. Every detail must indeed be subordinated to the tragic motive, but as this includes all that is of deepest import in life, and as the poet works through language, which, as Plato says, is far more mouldable[1] than clay or marble, he has an infinitely wider range than the statuary, who must seize one moment, which he selects with a view to outward effect, and must make this lastingly harmonious to the eye. For though the tragic poet is also limited to a brief time, yet how much of life and movement can the imagination crowd into an hour! In the quick successive flashes before the fall of the thunderbolt far more electric energy is put forth than in many days of

[1] εὐπλαστότερον. See Plato, *Republic*, bk. ix. p. 588 D.

serene weather. Yet the agitation of tragic movement must leave on the mind an impression of repose.[1] The spectator is to be moved, even harrowed, if you will, but the final effect on him is not that of anxious excitement. It is rather one of calm and meditative awe. If real belief took the place of imaginative illusion, the charm would break. The mental satisfaction must outweigh the horror. Harmony of impression must not be confused by actual pain. Men are not to be sent away sorrowful, nor merely excited, but satisfied, though it be with sadness.

A tragic action, then, is always contemplated as a whole—there is nothing transient, partial, *passagère* about it. It is a whole ideally, because of the art which has shaped it into a completed form which satisfies the imagination. And this ideal whole is symbolical of the whole of life. For in the highest tragedy we are not asked to abstract from our experience in order to contemplate some partial aspect of the world, the "humours" of a particular age or class of society; some special phase of character, the refinements of one natural tendency. It is a universal view of human things which the poet opens to us by the beacon-light of a passionate

[1] This is what Shakespeare means by the "temperance that may give it smoothness," and Longinus by the precept "one must be sober even when the Bacchic fit is on" (κἀν βακχεύμασι νήφειν ἀναγκαῖον).

history or the burning ruin of a disastrous example.

Hence tragedy always loses something when it leaves the high road of humanity, and turns aside from representing the great primary emotions to engage with some exceptional passion, some eccentric horror. This is why such plays as Webster's *White Devil* and Shelley's *Cenci* can never be placed in the first rank, despite their thrilling power. In passing from them to *Macbeth* or to the *Agamemnon*, we leave the stifling atmosphere of a chamber of horrors for the wholesome though stern realities of the open day. Even an essentially dramatic genius like Mr. Browning's comes short of tragedy for a similar reason. A saying of Schopenhauer's is here in point, that every life considered as a whole is a *tragedy*, while any portion of it detached from the rest is a *comedy*. The tragic catastrophe is in so far final. Of course in applying this remark to those grand series of productions known as the Aeschylean "trilogies," they should properly be regarded as three-act dramas. And even in tragedies like *Hamlet* and the *Antigone* there are allusions to past and future events. The action is not absolutely dissevered from the general course of human history. It gains in dignity from being enacted in "this wide and universal theatre." But as regards the agents in

whom the sympathies of the audience have been concentrated, the decision of destiny is finally delivered. The spectator witnesses the beginning, the crisis, and the consummation of the course of action or of suffering which forms the tragic theme. About a century ago attempts were made to soften the catastrophes of *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*. Nothing could more forcibly illustrate the decline of tragedy—what the old philosopher calls "the weakness of the theatre." Shakespeare, who in his *King Lear* did what was so unusual with him and changed the chronicle to suit the purpose of his art, was more in touch with antiquity, although he knew it not, than the critics of the eighteenth century. Romeo dying before Juliet awakes, Cordelia defeated and despatched before the arrival of the order of release, may be compared with Haemon breaking into the vault to find Antigone self-slain, or Hyllus sobbing out his vain remorse over the dead body of Deianira. This is tragic completeness. It is not enough for tragic effect that the source of tears should be unlocked—the emotions awakened by great tragedy are often "too deep for tears"—but the soul of the spectator must be profoundly moved by the contemplation of a great life either wrecked or endangered.

Our definition so far has included a few great

works, which all admit to be masterpieces of tragedy. But in order to be in accordance with the facts, the limits must be extended so as to comprehend what Dryden has called "that inferior sort of tragedies which end with a prosperous event." The *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, for example, concludes with the reconcilement of an opposition which had been obstinately maintained. In so far as such dramas are felt to be transitional and preparatory to something else their tragic force is weakened, but it would be too paradoxical to deny to them the name of Tragedies. It is difficult to set a boundary line to mark where tragedy ends and melodrama or high comedy begins. But it must be acknowledged that there is a larger sense in which every drama which deals in a serious spirit with any great aspect of human life, considered as a whole, deserves the name of Tragedy. Only, whether the struggle ends well or ill, there must be the representation of a struggle in which the microcosm of an essentially great life is shaken to its centre.

It is manifest that powerful characterisation is inseparable from the dramatic presentation of an action in the sense here indicated. For the action is that of human beings determined by motives which depend on character. The tragic poet is impressed with the truth that character is fate. Not that "man is master of his fate":

the sadness of life often consists in seeing that it is not so; but his fate is coloured by his nature and affects the spectator differently according to what he (the person represented) is. Often, too, the chief person lends himself to disaster; misfortune works through weakness or perversity. The tragic hero is the person who is most calculated to give poignancy to a particular tragic situation—to accentuate a specific phase of the sadness of life. It is not forgotten that the poet works on materials that are given to his hand; but in studying his art we have to consider his skill in moulding them. Thus in representing Hamlet as a man pre-eminently fitted for great practical achievements (a point which has been often overlooked), Shakespeare adds greatly to the tragic pathos of the destiny which crushes him. The tragic hero must be noble, to enlist our sympathies; passionate, to awaken our emotions by the expression of his own and to account for his misfortunes; he should have great aims and great opportunities, which are crossed and frustrated, or thrown away. Why are tragic actors and actresses so rare?—but because commonplace amiability replaces heroism, mere sentiment apes the part of passion, and the imagination fails to conceive (or to express) the grandeur of the sphere in which the tragic person moves. Observe what pains Shakespeare has taken with

the person of Antony (in *Ant. and Cleo.*) (1) to indicate the magnificence of his soldiership when not infatuated and the boundless generosity of his nature; (2) to make his passion adequate to the shamefulness of his fall; (3) to impress us with the fact that what he sacrifices is nothing less than the empire of the world. Yet it may well be doubted whether even this great work does not fall short of the very highest excellence by reason of something repulsive in the weakness of the principal characters.

In *Macbeth* the poet has taken equal care that, even where the essential purpose is to wrap the spectator in an atmosphere of horror, the audience shall not lose all sympathy with the perpetrator of the crime that horrifies them. He has gifted the criminal with his own power of concrete imagination, so that at every step, although led on by influences that are too strong for his will, the tyrant is conscious of his true position, and paints it to himself in vivid colours.

In some rare instances a character imagined as all but faultless (Prometheus, Antigone, Alcestis, Imogen, Nathan the Wise) has been made the hero or heroine of a tragedy. But even when faultless a tragic person is never unimpassioned. For tragedy lives and moves in an atmosphere of feeling, and the sources of its influence lie deep amongst the springs of personality. Hence the

hero of a tragedy is mostly one of whom, as Hamlet says, in words which have an obvious application to himself—

> The dram of base
> Doth all the noble substance oft subdue
> To his own scandal;—

in whom, as in Ajax, some "particular fault" involves the ruin of an otherwise noble nature, or some blind passionate outburst, as in the case of Oedipus, leads to unforeseen disaster at a far-off time.

Can we now describe in few words the function and the charm of tragedy? Life is full of sadness; each heart has its burden, "the unselfish for another's pain, the selfish for his own"—but life is also full of compensations, and every heart has moments of brightness too. We would not brood over our own sorrows—that would unfit us for the workaday world; but still our innermost self does not choose entirely to forget, and when we are most cheerful we feel that it is good for us to remember that life has a dark side for others if not for us. In sympathy with ideal sorrow, we are at once relieved from something of our own selfish burden, and prepared to enter into the depth of other men's experiences. But this is not all. Wherever there is great anxiety or great

sorrow there must have been great possibilities, large aims, strenuous endeavours, and if the audience is to be profoundly moved, the persons and actions must be such as to call forth their sympathies. There must be nothing narrow or undignified in the poet's conception of mankind and their strivings, and he must have an audience who are ready to take life *au grand sérieux*. The more life gains in significance, the richer may be the developments of tragedy.

The poet need not isolate the element of sadness to the exclusion of other aspects of life. The interest he awakens rather lies in this, that the moments he chooses to represent are those on which all vital issues hang, in which are concentrated the hopes and aspirations of many years. In other words, mere feeling is not enough. The sentimental drama is not tragedy. There must be action penetrated by feeling. For without this the interest is lyric rather than dramatic, just as, if the action is given by itself and not through feeling, the work approximates to an epic structure.

There are moments in the private lives of individuals which, in the amount of emotion which they are fitted to call forth, are no less tragic than the turning-points of history. And it would be hard to deny that as the value of the individual comes to be more felt, a great poet may make such crises the subjects of real tragedy. But hitherto,

even in the modern drama, it has been found essential to anything deserving the name of tragic treatment that the sphere of the action should be a wide one, and that the events should be such as to involve far-spreading consequences. The imagination of a great audience cannot otherwise be profoundly moved. And unless the action is seen in some way to involve results affecting either the nation or the race, the representation is wanting in an essential element of tragedy, *i.e.* greatness. Hence the two periods in which a really original tragic drama has arisen—the age of Athenian supremacy in Greece and the Elizabethan age in England—have succeeded times of rapid national development, when men's interests had been enlarged and their thoughts widened to a more comprehensive scope.

No great tragic composition is without unity or without repose. *Titus Andronicus* may be deficient in these, but not *Lear* or *Cymbeline*, manifold as are the subordinate interests in them. Of unity there will be occasion to speak at length hereafter. For the present it is enough to state that the action of every great tragedy is (1) continuous, (2) complete, and (3) that the effect which it produces on the feelings and thoughts of the spectators is harmonious—that there is a unity of impression. Those who censured Shakespeare as a despiser of the unities can have had no eyes

to see the profound elaboration with which, for instance in *Othello*, the manifold persons, their intricate relations to each other, their actions and their fortunes, are made to minister to the central effect. The same play may be adduced as an example of the grandeur which is inseparable from tragedy. While the private personal relations of Othello to the rest enchain our sympathies, Shakespeare deepens all this emotion, and at the same time holds us in the open day, by keeping well in view the splendour of the general's career, the magnitude of the interests of which he has been the centre, and the world-wide scene through which he moves to his fall.

As Aristotle says, the action has an end. Whether this be the final reconcilement of a conflict or some fatal catastrophe, the poet's art is so employed that the spectator does not go away merely disquieted. In the one case he has been excited and then soothed. In the other he has suffered with those whom he saw suffer, but in such a way that the beauty of the composition and the luxury of tears have relieved his heart, and instead of continuing to mourn over Oedipus or Heracles and their distant woes, he returns with deepened thoughts and strengthened resolution to encounter for himself the stern realities of life, or to bow in silent contemplation before its mystery.

The repose, then, is twofold—rest in contemplation of an artistic whole, and still deeper rest in contemplation of that greater whole which it symbolises.

An element of ethical reflection enters almost necessarily into all tragedy. For it is in the moment of struggle and difficulty that principles of action assume the highest importance, and that would not be a true representation, or fitted to command wide interest, which made persons who were to seem worthy of sympathy indifferent to morality at such times—least of all when the subject is a crime. See especially the words of Macbeth (Act i. Sc. 7)—

> This even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
> To our own lips. He's here in double trust.

Further, the tragic poet in dwelling on the prime springs of human conduct is naturally led to contemplate (after his own fashion as an artist) the ground of moral distinctions. Without this his representations must necessarily be wanting in depth and meaning. Mere blind unreflecting passion can never by itself be an adequate subject for the highest art. The blindness of tragic persons has the effect of pathos only when our imagination sees it in the light of reason. Emotion must be touched with thought.

The poet must somehow make felt the true nature of the situation as a whole, and in relation to human life as a whole. This is sometimes done, as in Medea and Macbeth, by showing flashes of the higher consciousness in the person who is enthralled to the lower (Eur. *Med.* 1078-80)—

> καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἷα δρᾶν μέλλω κακα·
> θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων
> ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς—
>
> How evil is the deed these hands shall do,
> I know ; but passion oversways my thoughts,
> Passion, the cause of boundless ills to men—

sometimes by other means; but unless this impression is conveyed, the work falls short of the highest art. The more profoundly the poet has meditated on the wonder and the mystery of life, the more fully he has appropriated the moral and religious thought which is current in his age, the more perfectly, other powers being equal, will he attain to this, the noblest aim of tragedy. And thus he will be not a poet merely, but a teacher of men, not through schemes of poetical justice, which at least in modern times have rather found their place in comedy, or by the number of undeniable maxims which his characters pronounce, but by making the action appear to the spectators as it would appear in reality to a wise and considerate observer, who, while profoundly

moved by the sufferings of noble human beings, has the power of regarding them in the light of their causes and results. And thus the inculcation of deep moral ideas, without injury to the "objectivity" of the work, is, to say the least, compatible with the essential function of tragedy.

All great tragedy is at once individual and universal—individual, because the action is the combined result of characters and situations which are believed as real; universal, because the same action is felt to be typical of human life in one of its primary aspects, as seen by the light of some passionate experience or of some signal example.

And if the age be one in which experience has not only been enlarged but deepened by the growth of moral ideas in thoughtful minds amounting to a new revelation, then the tragic poet, whose vision of truth and right is at least adequate to the advancement of his contemporaries, will make his poetry the vehicle of ethical truth, not because from a poet he becomes a preacher, but because he gives expression to his conception of life as a whole, and his creations bear the marks of that conception the more unreservedly in proportion as there are minds amongst his audience who are prepared to sympathise with him.

The truth which Aristotle sought to convey

is now sufficiently apparent. The value of his definition is seen to depend partly on the degree of emphasis given to the several terms of it, and partly to the amount which can be read into each of them. If the words expressing *seriousness*, *completeness*, *greatness*, are rightly accentuated and understood; if *pity* can be extended so as to include admiration and sympathy, and *fear* may be interpreted to mean, at once, terror, horror, wonder, and awe, and if in the purification of the emotions be included the refinement of feeling through reflection, there is little fault to find with his account. The chief defect in it is the confusion which he shares with all ancient writers between an imitation and an ideal creation, in which emotion, both as excited and as represented, is transfused with active and contemplative thought. Aristotle also fails to trace the evolution of the art from its rudimentary form and to recognise the religious basis, after the loss of which the art itself could not long subsist. (See below, Chapter III.)

CHAPTER II

TRAGEDY, ANCIENT AND MODERN [1]

WITHIN half a century after Shakespeare's death his reputation had suffered from the reaction to which the fame of most great poets has been liable. French models and French criticism were exercising a powerful influence on English literary taste, and a wave of classicism, like that which came from Italy in the sixteenth century, but without the counter-balancing popular impulse, was the result.

John Dryden—who, to do him justice, appreciated Shakespeare more fully than any of his contemporaries—was led by the fashion of the hour into some strange vagaries, such as the travesty of the *Tempest*, for which Davenant was partly responsible, and the freak of "tagging" Milton's verses with rhyme.

The mention of Antony in the preceding

[1] Books to consult: Dryden's *Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*; *Ency. Brit.*, art. "Drama"; Paul Stapfer's *Shakespeare et les Tragiques Grecs* (French); Wilson's *Hindu Theatre*, p. xi.; Pollard's *Miracle Plays*, Introd.

chapter may recall this poet's famous attempt to recast a Shakespearian drama in a classical mould. In the preface to *All for Love*, which is confessedly founded on *Antony and Cleopatra*, the author says: "I have endeavoured in this play to follow the practice of the ancients, who, as Mr. Rymer has judiciously observed, are and ought to be our masters. Horace likewise gives it for a rule in his art of poetry—

> "*Vos exemplaria Græca*
> *Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.*

Yet, though their models are regular, they are too little for English tragedy, which requires to be built in a larger compass.[1] . . .

". . . The fabric of the play is regular enough as to the inferior parts of it, and the unities of time, place, and action more exactly observed than perhaps the English theatre requires. Particularly, the action is so much one, that it is only of the kind without episode or underplot; every scene in the tragedy conducing to the main design, and every act concluding with a turn of it."

As is usual with him, Dryden is no more than just to his own work. *All for Love* is a very

[1] Cp. the same author's dedication to his *Third Miscellany*, where the contrast is drawn between French and English dramatic art: "They" (the French) "content themselves with a thin design without episodes and managed by few persons; our audience will not be pleased but with variety of accidents, an underplot, and many actors."

noble composition, and claims admiration even from those who are familiar with the Shakespearian play. What most concerns us here is to observe that the scene is laid wholly in Alexandria, and the time confined to what is subsequent to the battle of Actium. Whereas Shakespeare, following Plutarch, carries us from Alexandria to Rome and back again, to Messina, to Misenum, to Syria, to Athens, to Actium (both by sea and land), to the coast of Peloponnesus,[1] and to Alexandria once more. Then Enobarbus, with his comic vein, Pompey, Menas, and many other minor characters, are discarded by Dryden. The result is greater simplicity, and apparently, at first sight, greater concentration. But there is one thing more essential even than unity of action as here understood, and that is climax. This cannot be attained by skill in arrangement; and it is precisely this which Shakespeare, Aeschylus, and Sophocles never fail to attain. That is the mark of their profound and radical affinity. The fire of tragic passion, once kindled, blazes more and more fiercely and with a clearer flame until the height is reached; then comes the change, with clouds of smoke that gather round combustion, until the darkness of extinction follows. It makes no difference whether the bush out of the midst of which the flame appears be formed of

[1] Act iii. Scenes 11 and 13, wrongly headed in the editions.

many branches or of a few only. In all except the greatest tragedy the heat is apt to be exhausted before the crisis arrives. And in *All for Love*, by Dryden's own showing, the greatest scene is that between Antony and Ventidius in the first act.

The once-much-talked-of "unities" of time and place were less present to the minds of the ancient tragic writers than they have been to those of their critics. In so far as the supposed rules were really observed by them, they were matters of stage convenience and of theatrical convention, resulting partly from the continuous presence of the chorus. But unity of action is, as Dryden felt, a more essential thing. And it is observable in Shakespeare's tragedies no less than in the Greek drama. For the opposite of unity, in the true sense, is not multiplicity but incoherence. The distinguishing note of ancient tragedy is not unity but simplicity, which is a different thing. Simplicity and concentration, as characteristics of the Attic masterpieces, may be opposed to the greater comprehensiveness and discursiveness of a Shakespearian play.

1. In representing ludicrous side by side with serious aspects of life and character, Shakespeare probably met an imperious requirement of the Elizabethan stage, to which the Indian Vidúshaka[1] or jester presents a curious analogy. But in

[1] Monier Williams's *Sakuntalá*, Introd. p. xxx.

nothing is his art more marvellous than in the interpenetration of humour with pathos, as in *Lear*, or with horror, as in *Othello* and *Macbeth*. *Hamlet* stands alone—it is part of the irony pervading the whole piece—in introducing what is ludicrous (in the part of Osric) after the conclusion of the third act. The Fool in *Lear* does not survive the storm. A distant and yet real analogy may be traced between these laughter-making interludes and certain remnants of rusticity—*vestigia ruris*—in ancient tragedy, as in the persons of heralds, messengers, watchmen, etc., the nurse in the *Choëphoroe*, the Phrygian slave in the *Orestes*, and even the Cassandra of Euripides in the *Troades*, who, compared with the Cassandra of Aeschylus, is as Tilburina compared with Ophelia. Such traits have the effect of relieving by contrast the pervading sombreness of the tragic scene, and they were doubtless so intended by the poets. But only in the faintest manner can they be said to anticipate the broad comic touches in Shakespearian tragedy. Ancient tragedy is otherwise not without moments of relief, but the relief is transient and illusory, and serves rather to intensify the central gloom.

2. The introduction of underplots, a feature borrowed from comedy—which adds so greatly to the complexity, for example, of the action of *King Lear*—makes another obvious difference

between Shakespeare and the classic drama. Some anticipation of this comprehensiveness of plot may be found here and there in Euripides. But his attempt to extend the action, so far as it went, was injurious to unity of impression, coinciding as it did with an inevitable decline of that heroic or ideal nobility which constituted the chief excellence of ancient tragedy.

3. The most striking of all differences between Greek tragedy and the Shakespearian drama consists in the number, variety, and complexity of the characters. It is sometimes said that the characters in a play of Aeschylus or Sophocles are typical, while those of an Elizabethan play are individual.[1] The statement rests upon undoubted facts, but, as thus broadly put, is apt to be understood in a sense which is erroneous. The modern is more complicated, but the ancient not less real; while both are equally ideal. The point is, Whether does the author convince us, or does he not, of the reality of his persons? That the personality of Hamlet has more of range and elasticity than that of Eteocles or Ajax, for example, is manifest enough. Complexity of situation involves complexity of motive and of feeling. But Ajax and Eteocles are not the less alive; they are human beings of whose vitality no one who sees and hears the dramas can

[1] See, for example, A. Ward in *Ency. Brit.* vol. vii. p. 394.

entertain a doubt—more convincing, from the very fact of their solidity, than many "complex" characters in Beaumont and Fletcher's plays. Nor is every character in ancient tragedy so entirely simple. There are differences in this respect between the three great tragedians, which will appear in the sequel; and in the personality of the Sophoclean Oedipus or Philoctetes there are diverse elements which the poet's art has brought together and harmonised.

4. The multiplicity of characters in Shakespeare makes up in some degree for the absence of the chorus in so far as they represent the average bystander, while a substitute for those lyrical passages where emotion is reflected and magnified, in which the Chorus approaches more nearly to the character of the "ideal spectator," is found in the frequent use of the *soliloquy*—a conventional expedient for which the objective cast of ancient tragedy gave less of scope. It may be urged, however, that the Chorus supply an element for which no perfect substitute exists in the modern drama. While they mediate between the spectators and the scene before them, they collect into one focus many rays of feeling and reflection which must otherwise be scattered up and down the play. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the presence of the Chorus, while suited on the whole to the representation of

ancient life which passed chiefly in public and in the open day, either precludes or renders improbable many confidential scenes which greatly assist the totality of impression, and which no modern playwright can afford to omit.

5. It was the presence of the Chorus, as already said, that made necessary within certain limits the continuity of the action. But the limits were less narrow than has been sometimes assumed. A recent critic[1] has objected to the received understanding of the *Agamemnon*, that the King could not arrive from Troy within the day. The assertion is indisputable, but the objection is not to be sustained. For in other plays, and not in the *Agamemnon* only, the lapse of time is, through the illusion of the scene, in part idealised and in part ignored. On the other hand, no ancient dramatist could indulge in the inconsistencies which have led interpreters to puzzle themselves over the age of Hamlet, or which gave occasion for Professor Wilson's brilliant Time-analysis of *Othello*.

The difficulty of the task which the ancient playwright had to fulfil is obvious. In about half the time that is occupied by a Shakespearian play, the hearts of thousands were to be drawn forth and fixed on a supreme crisis, in which some serious aspect of human destiny was typified. The

[1] Dr. Verrall in his edition of the *Agamemnon*.

crowning issues of one or more representative lives had to be summed up and manifested in a few scenes. And this must be done with completeness of effect. The struggle of man with fate must be displayed in its rise, its culmination, and its close. When in addition to this it was required that the action should seem literally continuous, so that the presence of the Chorus throughout should not be felt as improbable, the severity of requirement was extreme. The difficulty was met by choosing the most critical moment for representation; and in so far the imagination of the spectator was less exercised than when, as in Shakespeare, he is called upon to witness a series of actions more or less widely separated in time. The ancient drama is thus characterised by intense concentration. And this has the further advantage of helping proportion, and giving depth to the composition by a sort of perspective. The necessity for employing narrative spares the audience such incidental scenes as the blinding of Gloucester and the murder of Banquo on the stage.

The great size of the Dionysiac theatre, with the consequent use of the mask, speaking-tube, and buskin, may well seem at first sight to have constituted a serious impediment to naturalness in the ancient drama. But mechanical obstacles are the artist's opportunities. And while all these

causes conspired to maintain simplicity and to intensify concentration, it cannot be alleged that they betrayed the great tragic poets into offences against nature. Each seems to have been present in spirit, not in the theatre itself, but at the imagined scene; and, strange though it may appear, it is certainly true that a speech of Ajax or of Oedipus may be broken up and varied in declamation to a moderate-sized audience without any essential departure from the meaning of the poet, but rather with the effect of interpreting him more faithfully. Similarly, there are delicate shades and turns of feeling in Euripides to which the mask and speaking-tube cannot have given adequate effect. It is clear that some conventions were discounted, and that much was left to the imagination, including many of the horrors described as present in the scene.[1] But where this is so, a great poet, instead of clipping the wings of his own fancy, rather indulges it the more. Witness the description of the English and French camps in *Henry V.*, where the author was well aware that the representation on the stage would

> much disgrace
> With four or five most vile and ragged foils
> The name of Agincourt.

There must always be some correlation between

[1] Stapfer, *Shakespeare et les Tragiques Grecs*, p. 24.

"naturalness" and convention.[1] Nor is it possible for us now to ascertain with what approximate success Greek actors may have represented nature, though encumbered with the paraphernalia of their theatre. There will be an opportunity for returning to this subject in Chapter v.

Besides the attributes of simplicity and concentration, ancient tragedy is stamped with a degree of objectivity and outwardness which, on the whole, differentiates its creations from those of the modern drama, steeped as this so often is with the introspectiveness or self-reflectiveness that pervades the modern world. In a Shakespearian tragedy, while there is no loss of that reality of presentation which alone can convince or move an audience, there is not only a richness of content which sometimes veils from us the artistic harmony, but the work presupposes a higher degree of conscious self-analysis than had any place in ancient Greek art. The arena of conflict is no longer the family or the state, Olympus or the world at large, but is laid within a human soul. So Brutus says—

> Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.
> The Genius and the mortal instruments

[1] The frequent soliloquies in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* would have been censured as unnatural by an ancient critic.

> Are then in council, and the state of man,
> Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
> The nature of an insurrection.

Some anticipation of this great change also is traceable in Euripides; but his reflection is apt to degenerate into sentimentalism, and his psychological analysis into sophistry.

Under all the differences between Shakespeare and the old tragedians there is an essential community. The unity of motive, which the simplicity of the ancient drama makes so manifest, is present also amidst the multifariousness of Shakespeare. It is more really observable in *Macbeth* or *Hamlet* than in the *Andromache*, *Hercules Furens*, *Orestes*, or many another play of Euripides. No scene in any of the English masterpieces is so manifestly foisted in for a merely mechanical purpose as the dialogue between the heroine and Aegeus in the *Medea*. And in one great point—the nature of the tragic hero and of the tragic life—the greatest works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Shakespeare are entirely at one.

As to the historical connection between Ancient and Modern which is sometimes assumed[1]—while it is certainly true that modern tragedy, like modern sculpture, sprang into life together with the revival of classical learning, it is not less

[1] Wilson's *Hindu Theatre*, Introd. p. 11; see Pollard's *Miracle Plays*, Introd.

certain that, in the advance from *Titus Andronicus* to *Romeo and Juliet*, and from *Romeo and Juliet* to *Macbeth*,[1] Shakespeare was not guided by any study of Aeschylus and Sophocles, nor of "Seneca by candlelight," but by the genius of his art.

[1] *Ency. Brit.* art. "Drama," p. 431 A. "In no respect is the progress of his technical skill more apparent—an assertion which the comparison of plays clearly ascribable to successive periods of his life would satisfactorily establish."

CHAPTER III

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF TRAGEDY[1]

WITHOUT some reference to the rise of tragedy in Attica, any theory of the nature of tragedy is after all unmeaning. We can hardly speak of "tragedy in the abstract" apart from Attic tragedy. For tragedy was made by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and their predecessors. All modern tragedy is really a continuation of the Greek, as with a very slight exaggeration all modern literature may be said to be a continuation or imitation of Greek literature. We do but resolve Greek tragedy into its elements in the attempt to analyse the notion of tragedy generally. Aristotle's outline, however wonderful in its general truth, must in this aspect be pronounced defective. Besides the confusion between imitation and creation, his account lacks depth of

[1] Books to consult: Bentley's *Phalaris*; Donaldson's *Greek Theatre*; Müller's *History of Greek Literature*; Jebb's *Primer of Greek Literature*; Jevons's *History of Greek Literature*; *Ency. Brit.* art. "Drama." See also Monier Williams' *Sakuntalá*.

historical background. He has to a great extent lost sight of the religious basis of tragedy, and regards it simply, after his manner, as an art having a definite end. Even so regarded, his definition will bear to be amended in the light of subsequent developments. Dryden[1] well observes that, if Aristotle had known Shakespeare, he might in some respects have modified his theory. The so-called "classical" dramas of France and Italy, as well as that of Spain, which was more distinctly rooted in popular favour, reflect some illustration—even through the fact that they are less original—on the true nature of their Greek archetypes.

And the comparison of the beginnings of tragedy in other races, however rudimentary in their development,—the Hindu theatre, more allied to romantic melodrama than to the Hellenic stage;[2] the heroic extravaganza of China and Japan; the rare imaginary dialogues of Hebrew literature, so sublime in spiritual conception, so naïve and crude in dramatic form,[3]—may at least help to assure us that this plant, which blooms so rarely—scarcely once anywhere in 2000 years—

[1] Answer to Rymer. Cp. Aristoph. *Poet.* c. iv. § 2: *τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐπισκοπεῖν ἆρ' ἔχει ἤδη ἡ τραγῳδία τοῖς εἴδεσιν ἱκανῶς ἢ οὔ, . . . ἄλλος λόγος.*

[2] "Nenn' ich Sakuntalá dich, und so ist alles gesagt."—Goethe. The existence of a regular drama in India appears to be subsequent to the conquests of Alexander.

[3] Song of Solomon, Job, Isaiah (c. xiv.)

is yet the outcome and natural exponent of a widespread human tendency. For our present purpose, however, we may confine our attention to the rise of tragedy in Hellas and in Attica, the cradle of the art.

According to a view long entertained by many persons, tragedy was supposed to have arisen from some chance meeting and amalgamation of previously existing literary tendencies, epic poetry being conjoined with lyric, the love of recitation mingling with the love of song. And it is quite true that in the earliest form actually known to us tragic poetry has already borrowed much from epic, lyric, gnomic, and iambic literature. But the principle of life which has assimilated all these extraneous elements is essentially different from all of them. The art had a separate and independent origin. Like every feature of Greek life it had religion at the root, and its birth was due to the worship of the Theban Dionysus, which was brought at some unknown period, by way of Eleutherae, into Attica.

Dionysus is more commonly known as Bacchus, the god of wine. But wine is only a symbol of all that is enlivening, cheering, invigorating—of the reawakening of vital energies in man, as in nature, of every access of new life that seems unaccountable, and is therefore attributed by early imagination to the direct inspiration of the

god. There is no need to lose oneself in the mazes of the great Dionysiac myth, or in speculations like those of the author of the *Golden Bough*. Whatever may have been the remote origin of Bacchic rites, it is manifest how inevitably a mythological logic must have extended their significance. It is important to observe that it was not an autumn festival of grape-ingathering or of the winepress that gave birth to the drama, but an early spring celebration, connected partly with the broaching of last year's wine and partly with the preparation of the vines for the season to come. How readily the thoughts natural to such a time may lend themselves to mythological personification is manifest from many indications in comparatively modern literature. Witness the black-letter ballad, of which Burns' "John Barleycorn" is an adaptation, and even Falstaff's rhapsody on "sherris-sack,"[1] which reads like a paraphrase of the speech of Demosthenes, the Athenian general, in the *Knights* of Aristophanes.[2] It was a spring festival, and therefore the rising of the sap, the bourgeoning of trees, the prodigality of the earth teeming with flowers, were all associated with the ideas of gladness, of rejuvenescence and of trembling hope, which Bacchus was known to inspire. The ivy with its evergreen shoots, purple-flushed veins, and

[1] 2 *Hen. IV.* Act iv. Sc. 3. [2] Aristoph. *Eq.* 89-96.

clustering berries had a fancied resemblance to the vine, and therefore, being available in spring-time, which the vine was not, it was consecrated to the service of the god. The goat is dangerous to the vineyard and a lover of the vine, and when "full of the god" he behaves wantonly; hence he is sacred to Bacchus, who is accompanied by a troop of goat-footed beings, led by Silenus as their "head-man"—these are called satyrs, and bear some resemblance to Arcadian Pan. The "tragic dance" was originally a dance of satyrs. Dionysus is also accompanied by women, either those who nursed his childhood, Thyiades, or those whom he had drawn from civic life to sport with him as Bacchanals over the hills. This does not mean that women of old were specially addicted to wine, but that there is something feminine in those irrational or unaccountable impulses which were attributed to Bacchic inspiration—whether regarded as a wild uncontrollable passion or as "divine madness." An analogous idea is latent in the worship which our Teutonic forefathers paid to women as having the gift of prophecy.[1] The Bacchic rout leaves public haunts for the wild wood; hence the pine-tree is sacred to the god, whose peculiar wand, the *thyrsus*, wound with ivy, is tipped with a pine-cone. Dionysus is said by Herodotus to

[1] Tacitus, *Germania.*

be younger than other gods. This statement is connected with his reputed birth from Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, whom Herodotus places 1600 years before his own time (*i.e.* 2100 B.C.), but may also be interpreted to mean that this worship, which we now know to be at least as primitive as that of Zeus, had not been from the first incorporated in the life of the *city*. The festival of Bacchus was essentially a *village* celebration, and there may have been a time, long after the organisation of public life within city walls, during which the wild "Bromius," or roaring deity, was regarded as a sort of "Pagan," an outsider. The legends of Pentheus and Lycurgus, and also a well-known tradition about Solon and Thespis, tend to strengthen this conjecture, which is here put forward, for what it is worth.

However this may be, a time came when Dionysus also was enrolled amongst the regular gods—the questionable pagan was *rangé*, and the old village festival, returning always with the early spring, became an essential factor in the life of the city. But this meant in a city like Athens that what was thus licensed was also regulated, and was shaped and moulded by the genius of Athenian art and by the public law.

The original freedom and abandonment of the Bacchic festival, however, made this mode of ritual exceptionally elastic and hospitable to other rites

and other powers, especially to those whose worship contained some kindred element of mysticism. Thus from very early times there was an interaction of Dionysiac with Eleusinian influences; the Thracian and Naxian cults of Dionysus were blended with the Theban. Moreover, the Phrygian Cybele, and, as Herodotus thought, even the Egyptian Osiris, were brought into some relation with the Eleutherian god. The adoption of this worship by the State involved the further acknowledgment, most important for tragic purposes, of Zeus, Apollo, and Athena; and ultimately of the Muses, the Erinyes, Hermes, Artemis, together with Themis, Nemesis, and other ethical impersonations. Before this process was completed, two impulses, inherent in the archaic rite, had taken separate form—one lawless, licentious, rollicking, abusive, yet on the whole good-humoured, the same which grew afterwards into the old comedy. That growth is easily accounted for. But in the Bacchic impulse there were also stirring other thoughts and feelings, less obvious because less superficial, not below but above rationality, common sense, and civic order, idealising the course of past events, and aspiring after some higher law. And these, in Attica and nowhere else, unless for a brief while at Sicyon, were the dim foreshadowings of the art that was destined to bring forth the *Oresteia*, the *Prometheus*, and the *Antigone*.

Some are tempted to think that the serious side of Bacchic ritual in Attica was due to its early contact with the Eleusinian worship, of which something has been already said,—that the joyous son of Theban Semele came to be identified with his namesake, the "Winter Bacchus," as he has been called, Dionysus Zagreus, the child of sad Persephone and Pluto, her dark bridegroom. But although Eleusinian legend is already represented in a play of Choerilus,[1] and Aeschylus, who was undoubtedly a worshipper of Demeter, distinctly mentioned Zagreus in his play of *Sisyphus* (fr. 224, Nauck), there is no clear evidence that the *origin* of tragedy is to be thus accounted for, however largely Eleusinian influence may have been blended with its after growth—even that influence being less due to any mystic leanings than to the historical fact that Eleusis was now a part of Attica. Allusions to Bacchus in the extant plays are mostly confined to the Theban and Eleutherian god; there are few traces in them of the mystical Iacchos, although Sophocles twice applies the name to Semele's son. And the Bacchic subjects actually treated, the stories of Lycurgus and Pentheus, clearly belong to the widely established worship of the giver of the vine.

Again, the acknowledged difficulty may be

[1] The *Alope—circa* 500 B.C.

partly met by saying in a vague and general way that the springs of laughter and of tears, of joy and grief, in human nature lie close together, that "men in drinking-songs spice their gay banquet with the dust of death," and so forth. And this is true enough, but not sufficiently precise.

The first step towards the genesis of tragedy was the invention of the Dithyramb, which Herodotus attributes to the Lesbian singer Arion of Methymna, who was resident in Corinth. By this union of Aeolian inspiration with Dorian regularity, a graceful restraint was imposed on the wild licence of the festival, while choral song was differentiated from the Comus or revel-rout, which, as Aristotle says, contained the germ of comedy. Pindar also, in the thirteenth Olympian ode, credits Corinth with the dithyramb.

In the time of Archilochus of Paros (700 B.C.), who sings—

> Well I know to lead the hymn of Dionysus, king divine,
> Chanting dithyrambs, my spirit all aflame with wondrous wine—

this kind of song seems to have been still more or less a work of improvisation. In later times, as may be gathered from Aristophanes and Plato, the dithyramb was regarded as a rhapsodical form of poetry, tending to bombast and inflation—a sort of metrical fugue.

Only one considerable fragment of a dithyrambic poem remains,—the opening lines of an ode composed by Pindar for choral performance at Athens. The following is a tolerably close rendering. Those who look for something bacchanalian, in the modern sense, will be disappointed. The passage is quoted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus as an example of "austere harmony."

PART OF A DITHYRAMB (sung by fifty in a ring).

PIND. fr. 53.

Olympian Gods, behold our band!
Send grace and glory on our land!
Ye who in Athens' hour of mirth
Gather around her midmost hearth
That smokes with incense, while along
Each roadway troops the civic throng,
Visit the splendour and renown
Of the Agora, and from this crown
Of rathe-culled violets renew
Your spirits with their heavenly dew.
Look down on him who from the praise
Of high-throned Zeus, on echoing ways
Of glorious song, approaches now
The God with ivy-berried brow;
Him whom we mortals Bromius[1] name,
The God of far-resounding fame,
Child of great Zeus and the Cadmeian dame.

[1] A name of Bacchus—"the roaring God."

That time the Nemean prophet [1] knows
When first the date-palm sheaths disclose
Their budding shoots, and fragrant flowers
Feel the sweet moment when the Hours
Open their balmy chambers wide,
And Spring breaks forth on every side.
Then violets spread their lovely blooms
O'er the blithe ground, and rich perfumes
Fróm rose-bud wreaths our braided locks entwine.
Then tuneful voices with loud flutes combine;
And Bacchic choirs hymn curl-browed Semelè divine.

This passage, about contemporary with the earlier work of Aeschylus, has no touch of mysticism, and it has a vein of serious poesy. Nor is the invocation of the Olympian gods and the praise of Zeus at this time held inconsistent with Bacchic worship. Meanwhile, a generation earlier, a capital step had been made by separating the tragic from the dithyrambic chorus. This was implied in the change attributed to Thespis. And if it is borne in mind that in those early days men of all natures, gay and serious alike, took eager part in the same yearly festival, it will not seem wonderful that in Attica at least some poets whose minds were touched to finer issues found an audience ready to respond to them, and in presenting passages, whether from the legend of Bacchus or some heroic fable, ventured to mingle with the goat-footed satyrs' dance and song

[1] "The Nemean prophet." Perhaps the priest of the grove of Zeus at Nemea.

some traits of what is known to us as "tragic" dignity and pathos. This kind, once introduced in such a soil, was sure to grow. And just as men in England wearied of the grotesque monotony of the old Moralities,—the old Vice, with his dagger of lath, the seven worthies, "mouths of Hell," and other properties of that rude stage, and were prepared to welcome some embodiment of native chronicles, such as representations of the dark reign of John, or of the long contention between the Houses of York and Lancaster, so the legend of the sons of Aeacus and of the Cadmeian dynasty, of the old supremacy of Argos or of the wars of Athens and Eleusis, by degrees supplanted the purely Dionysiac mythology.[1] In like manner at Sicyon, in still earlier times, the hero Adrastus had been honoured with "tragic choruses"[2]—perhaps through the genius of one Epigenes, whose name has been handed down as a Sicyonian tragic poet. In this fragment of tradition may be traced some adumbration of the change, which Thespis appears to have carried farther, perhaps already borrowing his fables from epic poetry.[3] And from hence began that further

[1] When this began, the old-fashioned spectators are said to have cried "What has this to do with Bacchus?"—*οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον*, —which passed into a byword for anything irrelevant.

[2] Herod. v. 67, 68.

[3] Aeschylus is reported to have said that his own tragedies were "scraps from the Homeric banquet."

differentiation of tragedy from the "satyric" drama which Phrynichus and Pratinas completed. The ruder elements of the dance and song were relegated to the satyric play, and the whole performance became a serious thing, though still mainly choral—the speeches of the Coryphaeus, or "head-man," which kept the audience *au courant* with the progress of the story, making only brief interruptions in the flow of song. By-and-by a separate personage appeared over against the Chorus. He was called the "answerer" (ὑποκριτής), because he told his tale in answer to the questionings of the Coryphaeus. The new interest awakened by this interplay suggested the addition of a second "answerer" or actor, an innovation said to have been introduced by Aeschylus. Thus dialogue was born, and the elementary furnishings of Greek drama were now complete.

Not only did the worship of Dionysus absorb other worships, but, as already hinted, the tragic art laid heavy contributions on other modes of lyric, gnomic, and iambic poetry, as well as on the epic rhapsodies. And thus the natural love of recitation, which found vent in epic verse, and the need for expression, to which an outlet had been provided in the Aeolic and Doric lyric poetry (the Aeolic mode being more individual, the Doric more national), were blended by the Attic genius into one pregnant form. In some

respects epic poetry contained a clear anticipation of the drama, and gave examples of noble and stately movement to the tragic poet. Achilles in the *Iliad* is to all intents and purposes a tragic hero, and in the conduct of the fable the art of Homer is at least on a par with that of the tragedians. But the prime motive to which tragedy owed its origin was less one of curiosity than of sympathy, or of the desire for expression. It was only when feeling had been raised to an extraordinary pitch through the excitement of choric song, and the imagined presence of Dionysus at his festival, that there grew up the passion for impersonation, the desire for immediate vision (ἔποψις) of the acts and objects about which emotion was becoming transcendent. For the satisfaction of this want the Dionysiac worship alone gave adequate scope. One cannot imagine a direct transition from epic to dramatic poetry. The rôle of the rhapsode had long since become a "limited profession." Even had the craving for impersonation arisen amongst his audience, the stately epic muse would never have condescended to gratify it. But the drama, when it once arose, had an assimilating power by which it took up pre-existing forms and endued them with a fresh and more intense vitality.

By a coincidence which was fruitful in consequences, the most essential steps in this development

had taken place,—the worship of the Theban Dionysus had been transplanted from Eleutherae to Athens, the tragic chorus had been developed as a distinct form of art, and this religion had interlaced its branches, if not its roots, with those of Demeter, Apollo, and the other deities, before the great awakening of national life which preceded and followed the Persian war. But for the expulsion of the tyrants, but for the field of Marathon, the growth of tragedy might have been arrested, and the great masterpieces might never have seen the light. The Peisistratidae had indeed done much to prepare the way. But the art in which a nation takes delight at the moment when its life is culminating has a unique chance of coming to perfection. And the dramatic art, being above all others dependent on "public means," could only grow by being accepted as a national burden. Nor was the universal public interest less indispensable than the liberality which was its outward sign.

The dithyrambic Chorus numbered fifty persons. The number of the tragic Chorus in the time of Aeschylus and Sophocles is said to have ranged from twelve to fifteen. Pollux, however, tells a story to the effect that the Chorus was cut down from fifty to twelve or fifteen because of the panic caused in the theatre by the Furies as represented by Aeschylus. K. O. Müller, in his edition of

the *Eumenides*, tried to reconcile conflicting traditions by supposing a Chorus of fifty to be supplied, two of whom were told off as actors, while the remaining forty-eight were divided amongst the four dramas of the tetralogy. The choreutae who were unemployed in each particular drama are supposed by him to have been held in reserve as supernumeraries,—for example, as the twelve Areopagites and the attendants of Athena in the *Eumenides*. It is enough to have alluded to this theory, which is useful as reminding us that Aeschylus must have always had a large number of supernumerary performers at his command.[1]

From the moment of the introduction of the second actor, the evolution of the tragic art proceeds with rapid strides. Several stages of this development are distinctly manifest in the extant Aeschylean plays.

In the *Supplices* of Aeschylus we find tragedy not far removed from its choral origin. The dialogue is nascent, naïve, unformed; the lyrical numbers, on the other hand, are full and perfect. The sweetness of their cadences reminds us of what is said of Phrynichus, the predecessor of Aeschylus, how he charmed the Athenians of his day with harmonious strains.

Here the Chorus have unmistakably the

[1] This point is rightly insisted on by Dr. Verrall. But see *infra*, Chap. VII.

principal rôle—the parts of Danaüs, the King, and the Herald merely serving to keep the story on foot and to link together the various utterances of the maidens.

In the *Persae* (472 B.C.) the action on the stage becomes more important, although the drama is still mainly lyrical. Atossa is an imposing figure, and the Ghost of Darius, rising above his tomb, is invested with pathetic sublimity. But the dialogue is largely maintained between the Chorus and one actor. Hardly anywhere is it necessary to have two persons at once upon the stage. On the other hand, the art of tragic narrative has reached maturity in the account of the battle of Salamis. In the *Seven* (467 B.C.) there is a manifest development of dialogue—not, indeed, as yet between two chief persons, but first between Eteocles and the Scout (1st Messenger), and afterwards between Antigone and the Herald. The prominence of the principal person is also clearly marked, and this makes an advance in dramatic business. There is a prologue before the entrance of the Chorus, and Eteocles begins the play.

In each of the remaining plays of Aeschylus there is a prologue, but it is not assigned to the chief person except in the *Choëphoroe*, where Orestes, addressing Pylades, is the speaker. In the *Agamemnon* the Watchman prologises, in

the *Eumenides*, the Pythoness, in the *Prometheus*, Kratos ("Power") and Hephaestus; Prometheus being present, indeed, but silent.

The *Agamemnon* (458 B.C.) shows an immense advance in dramatic and tragic force, which is continued in the *Choëphoroe*. The climax of the *Agamemnon*, where the Cassandra-scene is followed by the death-shriek, perhaps marks the highest point reached by Attic tragedy.

Aeschylus is credited with the introduction of the second actor, and by the time when he produced the *Choëphoroe* he had adopted the further improvement (attributed to Sophocles) of the third actor. And, as already observed, there is hardly any limit to the number of supernumeraries whom he is ready to bring on the stage for the purposes of a procession or other ceremony. But, on the other hand, even his maturest work retains much of the simplicity of structure, with regard to dialogue, which must have characterised the art when, as in the time of Thespis, the one actor, in the intervals of choral song, conversed with the Coryphaeus.[1] Such dramatic business as occurs in the *Supplices* between Danaüs and King Pelasgus, or between the Herald and the King, may be described as inchoate, or only half-evolved. It is sketchy and crude. In the *Persae* the presence of

[1] What remains to be said upon this subject is reserved for the separate chapters on Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

Atossa no doubt adds greatly to the impressiveness of the ghost-raising scene. But very little of dramatic interchange takes place between the two great personages, although that little is nobly and pathetically conceived.

In the *Seven*, as already indicated, the Scout is only a Chorus-leader with brevet rank. Even in the *Agamemnon* the passages which require the presence of two actors are few and brief, and excepting in the dialogue between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon before his entry to the palace, there is no conversation between them, even when present,—Cassandra is silent, Clytemnestra addresses the Chorus rather than the Herald; and again, when she and Aegisthus are on the stage together, she makes no answer to the taunts of the Elders. From the Sophoclean point of view, this is not economy but parsimony. Yet nothing in Sophocles is more essentially dramatic than the climax of the *Choëphoroe*.

CHAPTER IV

SUBJECTS OF GREEK TRAGEDY—CHOICE OF FABLE[1]

THE tragic poet hardly ever invents his fable. His duty is to present in the concrete, with living power, an action of which some lineaments are already given in legend or tradition. It was only when the great period of Hellenic tragedy was past that such an elegant caprice could be attempted as the *Flower* of Agathon, in which the persons (so-called) were invented by the poet. The taste for novelty, to which such a poem appealed, would be attributed by lovers of Aeschylus to the degeneracy of the contemporary theatre. A good reason for the preference of known subjects is assigned by Aristotle :—" What is possible is credible, and what once happened was clearly possible." A capital advantage is gained, in point of verisimilitude, when that is represented

[1] Continual reference should be made to Smith's *Dictionary of Classical Biography and Mythology*. See also the first volume of Grote's *History of Greece*.

which the audience are predisposed to believe. The imagination of the ancient spectator met the poet half-way and conspired with him in producing an atmosphere of illusion. "The theatre was the poet," in a sense like that in which Plato says, "the world is the Sophist,"—except that the *vult decipi* was of a more childish and innocent kind. Hence when Aristotle says, "The poet must himself invent, or make good use of what is handed down," the invention of which he speaks must be understood as subject to traditional limitations.

The difference in this respect between the ancient and the modern stage is, however, not so great as has been sometimes supposed.[1] It is apt to be thought that the old legends were familiarly known to all the Athenian citizens, whereas Aristotle says expressly (*Poet.* 1451 *b*), "the best known fables are known to few, yet give delight to all." The knowledge of the few supplied the assurance that "this really happened." So at the first exhibition of a play of Shakespeare the scenic illusion would be enhanced for the less-informed when they were told by those who knew something of the novel on which it was based, "the story is extant, and written in very choice Italian."

While the ancient poet's choice was in this way limited, it is obvious that he gained a capital advantage in the reality of the interests to which

[1] Spalding's essay on the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, pp. 62-78.

he appealed. To the Athenian of the age of Cleisthenes or of Miltiades the local or neighbouring hero was still a living power, whose destinies were inseparably bound up with the national existence. But the limitation was notwithstanding considerably severe, and was aggravated by two causes, (1) the sameness of many legends, and (2) the necessity of selecting subjects specially fitted for tragic treatment.

(1) The traditional fables, however numerous, tended to ring the changes on a few striking incidents which had been impressed on the savage fancy of a primitive time—the avenger of blood, the outcast, the accursed family, the return of the exile, the recognition of the lost, the protection of the suppliant, the purification of the polluted, the horrors of incest and of parricide or matricide.[1] These ancient and often grotesque conceptions the poet had to make his vehicle for "holding up the mirror" to a refined and thoughtful age. The unnatural features of such myths as those of Alope, Actaeon, and Callisto had to be softened away. With all one's knowledge of the power of Greek Art to humanise and beautify, it is hard to conceive, for example, how the story of Actaeon could be treated tragically.

[1] Thus there was a certain family-likeness between the fables of Orestes and Alcmaeon, of Atalanta and Merope, of Callisto and Amymone, of Adrastus and Oedipus, of Theseus and Heracles.

(2) As the aim of tragedy began to be more clearly seen, the range of choice was still more narrowed, until, as Aristotle says, it tended to be confined to a few great houses, whose fortunes supplied characters, situations, and catastrophes of an eminently tragic nature. It would appear, however, if we turn over the existing fragments, that the philosopher is speaking, as indeed his language indicates, not of all tragedies, but of those which he regarded as masterpieces. With regard to many fragments the doubt is raised whether the piece was tragic or satyric. Some of those of Aeschylus may belong to a time when the distinction was not yet clearly drawn.

Be this as it may, the proper subject of tragedy was not all at once determined. Before the time of Aeschylus we can discern two critical moments in this process, which, if we knew more of it, might teach us much about the genius of the Art.

(1) Herodotus records that down to the time of Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon, one hundred years before Aeschylus, the inhabitants of that town had been accustomed to honour with "tragic choruses," not Dionysus, but Adrastus, the grandson of Polybus. Without dwelling on the etymology of the name Adrastus,[1] or the mythical relation of the hero to Oedipus, we may infer

[1] Connected with *Adrasteia*, "the Inevitable."

from this statement that before tragedy had anywhere assumed the dramatic shape the tendency to substitute some local celebrity for Dionysus had already taken head. If this happened so early at Sicyon, it was still more likely to take place at Athens, where the popular inclination in such matters in the times before Peisistratus was less liable to be checked by a despotic will. And the liberty once assumed must have been freely exercised, for Aristotle says, referring to the early period, "the poets at first went through the cycle of the legends as they came." [1]

(2) A bolder step was made when two great events, the suppression of the Ionic revolt and the repulse of Persia, inspired the wish to dramatise contemporary history. The *Taking of Miletus*, and the *Phoenissae*, both by Phrynichus, showed the influence of these two great successive waves of Hellenic history. The *Persae* of Aeschylus (however imaginative in treatment) marks the continuation of the same movement, which reappeared once more in the *Aetneans*, composed by the same poet for the inauguration of Hiero's new city.

Although the genius of the art itself, much more than the fine imposed on Phrynichus "for reminding the citizens of their sorrows," [2] withdrew

[1] *τοὺς τυχόντας μύθους ἀπηρίθμουν.*

[2] Cp. the recent suppression by the French Chamber of Deputies of plays by Coppée and Sardou representing crises in the national life.

tragedy again within the charmed sphere of heroic legend, the Attic stage never lost the impulse, of which this realistic outburst gave vivid proof, by which a national sentiment was fused with the religious, and the drama was consequently raised to a more commanding elevation. In again becoming more ideal, tragic poetry did not cease to be patriotic, and in that sense, real. But the general rule once more obtained that every tragic fable must be at once familiar to fancy and remote in fact.

The total number of fables known to have been made the subject of tragedy in the fifth century B.C. is about 340 (discounting satyric dramas). Of these 234 were used by the three greatest poets. Aeschylus has 67 peculiar to him as distinguished from the other two, Sophocles 69, Euripides 61. Of the 37 remaining, only 5, Ixion, Oedipus, Palamedes, Telephus, and Philoctetes, are common to all three, while 9 are common to Aeschylus and Sophocles, 8 common to Aeschylus and Euripides, and 15 common to Sophocles and Euripides.[1]

The poet's choice was naturally relative to the taste of his audience, and the character of the prevalent motives consequently differed somewhat

[1] The number of fables peculiar to any one author might be diminished by observing that different titles (as in *Choëphoroe*, *Electra*) often cover one and the same theme.

from time to time. But as in the case of other arts, traditional convention retained a lasting hold. As in Italian painting, it is less the subject-matter than the mode of treatment which distinguishes one period from another.

In attempting to classify the fables—to avoid cross-division is impossible—we have to distinguish (I.) Mythological or superhuman subjects from (II.) Heroic legend. The motives for selection, apart from tragic aptitude and tradition, are mainly (1) religious, (2) patriotic, (3) panhellenic, cherishing the remembrance of great common enterprises.

I. Superhuman Subjects.

This class of fables is, comparatively speaking, absent from the theatre of Sophocles. This poet hides his celestial machinery as he conceals his art. The gods, whose action is all-pervading, are personally withdrawn by him to an unseen Olympus. But the supernatural themes on which the spectator of Aeschylus gazed with simple earnestness were partially revived by Euripides in a romantic or phantastic spirit. In his *Phaëthon*, for example, which answered more or less to the *Heliades* of Aeschylus, the Sun-god himself was one of the speakers, uttering vain words of caution to his adventurous boy.

In his daring presentation of superhuman

persons, Aeschylus was no doubt seconded by the unsophisticated imagination of his audience, whose taste was not fastidious but responsive even to crude suggestion. Oceanus riding on his griffon was not to their minds the grotesque figure he would be to us. Their pity, not their risibility, was moved by the entrance of Io with the horns of a cow. It was not so long since a strapping lass, accoutred as Athena, had led Peisistratus home, and the proclamation of the Herald that Athena herself had brought the exile back, produced more than a theatrical illusion.

(1) The description of the chief scene in the *Psychostasia* of Aeschylus ("Souls in the Balance") given by several ancient authors forcibly recalls to mind the simplicity of a medieval miracle- or mystery-play. In the centre, high-enthroned, sate Zeus himself, the father of gods and men. In his right hand he held the balance, whose beam extended far to right and left. In one scale stood the soul of Achilles, and beside this his mother Thetis, in the attitude of prayer, was entreating the Highest that her son might win. In the other scale the soul of Memnon, son of the morning, stood, and his mother Eôs, the Dawn (Aurora), on her part similarly besought the supreme favour for her child. This tableau, we may suppose, continued while long speeches were delivered on either side.[1]

[1] Pausanias (v. 22) mentions the treatment of this subject in plastic art.

In another play, the *Psychagogi* ("Ghost-Raisers"), Odysseus, as in the eleventh *Odyssey*, seems to have called up the spirits of Teiresias and others from the shades. The Chorus were probably Cimmerians. The raising of Darius in the *Persae* resembles this. And in the *Sisyphus* also the underworld must have been revealed to view. It is not impossible that in his *Eumenides*, magnificent as it is, the poet may have carried the staging of the supernatural too far for the temper of the age.

We gather from a statement of Pollux that in the *Toxotides* (or "Archer-Nymphs") representing the fortunes of Actaeon, that luckless hero actually came upon the stage with the stag's horns budding from his mask! As in Io's case, this must have moved wonder, horror, and pity, but not laughter. Unless, indeed, it may be supposed that this and some other of the lost tragedies belonged to the early time, before the line of distinction had been sharply drawn between tragedy and the satyric drama.

(2) Among the divine persons brought upon the Aeschylean stage was Dionysus himself, according to the immemorial tradition. The Dionysiac cycle of myths contained two groups, one referring to the birth and nurture of the god, the other celebrating the establishment of his worship in Thebes and in Thrace respectively. To the

former group belonged, amongst the plays of Aeschylus, the *Semelè* and *Dionysus' Nurses*, to the latter, the *Pentheus*, *Xantriae*, *Bassarides*, and the Lycurgean trilogy,[1] including the *Edonians* and the *Neaniscoi*, or "Young Men." A characteristic fragment of the *Edonians* describes the impression produced by the Bacchic rout on unaccustomed ears. (An allusion to "Dread Cotytto's mysteries" had preceded.)

> One held that labour of the lathe
> The flageolet, and with full breath
> Shrilled forth a tune of maddening sound ;
> One clashed the cymbals brass-y-bound.
> The countless chorus shout reply,
> And from dim regions, by-and-by,
> Comes bellowing noise of bull-like roar,
> While from beneath the forest-floor,
> As from some subterranean drum,
> Thunders of mimic timbrels come.

Although Sophocles often alludes to Bacchic rites with the unction of a devotee, Bacchic fables, like other superhuman subjects, seem to have been avoided by him, except in his satyric dramas. But Euripides in the *Bacchae*, one of his last plays, revived the story of Pentheus with splendid success.

[1] The satyric drama belonging to the same trilogy seems to have contained a contemptuous allusion to *beer*, or to some form of barley-bree. Fr. 120 (Nauck).

II. Heroic Legends.

These may be subdivided into :—

1. Legends connected with great cities.
2. Panhellenic legends.
3. Fables having no apparent national or political significance.

1. Great Cities.

It is remarkable that myths and legends of purely Attic origin and bearing form but a trifling proportion of the whole number. This is to be accounted for by what has been already noticed, the conservatism of tragic art, especially with regard to the subjects to be handled. Dramatic conventions had taken their bent before Athens had fully realised the consciousness of her supremacy. And even after this the spirit of Greek Art and of Greek Religion was more comprehensive than any local patriotism. Hera was still the lady of Argos. Bacchus and Heracles were still lords of Thebes. Not the recent politics, inter-civic or otherwise, of these states were in question, but their ancient glories and disasters, the remembrance whereof was the common inheritance of Hellas. Nor was Athenian feeling compromised in dwelling on the times before the Dorian conquest. It was chiefly in relation to Sparta that a

certain narrowness gradually crept in, affecting not the poet so much as his theatre. Laconian subjects are few and far between (the *Tyndareus* and *Lacaenae* of Sophocles stand alone in the great period), and other themes, especially in Euripides, are apt to come round to praise of Athens and dispraise of Sparta. In this, however, there is a falling off from the nobleness of the *Eumenides*.

(1) According to Hellenic tradition, Argos had once been the metropolis of Greece, or rather, of Pelasgia, and this under two successive dynasties, before the return of the Heracleids,—the Perseidae and the Pelopidae. Two strains of legend accordingly wound about this centre.

(*a*) The genealogy of Perseus, involving the tragic story of Danaë, leading backward to those of Hypermnestra, of the other Danaïdes, and of Io, and forward to the birth and labours of Heracles. This cycle had been already touched by Phrynichus in his *Aegyptians* and his *Daughters of Danaüs*,—nearly the same in subject with the *Supplices* and *Danaïdes* of Aeschylus. Other themes connected with it are *Acrisius* (Soph.), *Andromeda* (Phryn. (?), Soph., Eur.), *Danaë* (Soph., Eur.), *Dictys* (Eur.), the "Net-draggers" (Aesch.), *Io* (Chaeremon),[1] *Perseus* (Aristias), and *Polydectes* (?) (Aesch.)

[1] The story of Io is interwoven by Aeschylus with that of Prometheus.

(*b*) The tale of "Pelops' line," from Tantalus to Iphigenia. The tragic destiny of Orestes forms the culminating point in this famous series of horrors, of which the Thyestean banquet and the sacrifice of Iphigenia are also important links. The following plays amongst others belonged to this cycle[1]:—

Adrastus (Aristias?)
* Agamemnon (Aesch., Ion).
Atreus (Soph.)
* Choëphoroe (Aesch.)
Chrysippus (Eur.)
Clytemnestra (Soph.)
* Electra (Soph., Eur.)
Erigone (Phryn. (?), Soph.)
Eriphyle (Soph.)
* Eumenides (Aesch.)
Hermione (Soph.)
Hippodamia (Soph.)
Iphigenia (Aesch., Soph.)
* * Iph. A. and Iph. T. (Eur.)
Niobe (Aesch., Soph.—She was also connected with Thebes).
Oenomaüs (Soph., Eur.)
* Orestes (Eur.)
Pleisthenes (Eur.)
Tantalus (Phryn., Aristias, Soph.)
Thyestes (Chaeremon).
Women of Mycenae (Soph.)

[1] The extant plays are distinguished with the asterisk.

(2) Thebes was the home of Bacchus and the birthplace of Heracles, and as such was celebrated in the Dionysiac worship which had its origin from thence. The Cadmeian dynasty, beginning from Cadmus himself, supplied many heroes and heroines to tragic story. The following are the titles of the chief plays whose subjects were drawn from this important source of legend :—

Alcmaeon (Soph., Eur.)
Alcmene (Aesch., Eur.)
Amphitryon (Aesch., Soph.)
* Antigone (Soph., Eur.)
Antiopa (Eur.)
* Bacchae (Eur.)
Cadmus (Eur.)
Epigoni (Aesch., Soph.)
Eriphyle (Soph.)
* Hercules Furens (Eur.)
Hypsipyle (Eur.)
Laius (Aesch.)
Nemea (Aesch.)
Niobe.[1]
* Oedipus (Aesch., Soph., etc.)
* Oedipus Coloneus (Soph.)
Pentheus (Aesch.)
* Phoenissae (Eur.)
Phoenix (Soph.)

[1] The Cadmeians were almost as much interested as the Pelopidae were in the fate of Niobe. See above.

Semelè (Aesch.)
* Seven against Thebes (Aesch.)

Many of the stories connected with the life and death of Heracles are directly or indirectly associated with Thebes, the city of his birth. Like Dionysus, this hero is mostly reserved by Sophocles for satyric drama (*e.g. Omphale*). His death forms, indeed, the catastrophe of the *Trachiniae*, but the honours of Protagonist are at least shared between him and Deianira. Other tragedies in which the fortunes of Heracles play a prominent or foremost part are—

* Alcestis (Phryn., Eur.)
Alcmene (Aesch., Eur.)
Antaeus (Phryn.)
Eurytidae (Ion).
* Hercules Furens (Eur.)
Licymnius (Eur.)

In this last he is associated with Theseus, his Athenian antitype.

(3) Athenian fables are altogether more numerous in Sophocles and Euripides than in Aeschylus. Eleusinian and Aeginetan legends may be classed as Attic subjects, the former because Eleusis had long since become part of Attica, the latter because, as eponymus of the tribe Aiantis, the Telamonian Ajax formed a link between Aegina and Athens. He and the other Aeacids were held to have protected the

Greek fleet at Salamis, and thus the hereditary glories of the great Aeginetan families, of which Pindar sang, became the objects of Athenian pride. Attic fables, as thus reckoned, naturally occupy an important place. The following dramas turn on Attic themes :—

Aegeus (Soph., Eur.)
* Ajax (including the Judgment of the Arms—Aesch., Soph.)
Alope (Choerilus, Eur.)
Cercyon (Eur.)
Creüsa (Soph., cp. Ion).
Daedalus (?) (Soph.)
Eleusinii (Aesch.)
Erechtheus (Eur.)
Eurysakes (Soph.)
* Heraclidae (Eur.)
* Hippolytus (Eur. *bis*).
* Ion (Soph., Eur.)
Judgment of Arms (Aesch., cp. Ajax).
Minos (if connected with Theseus) (Soph.)
Orithyia (Aesch., Soph.)
Pandion (Philocles).
Peirithoüs (Eur. ?)
* Persae (Aesch.)
Phaedra (Soph., cp. Hippolytus).
Procris (Soph.)
Salaminiae (Aesch.)

Tereus (Philocles).
Teucer (Ion, Soph.)
Theseus (Soph., Eur.)
Thracian Handmaids (Aesch.)
Triptolemus (Soph.)

After all, the list of purely Attic subjects is not inordinately long, even if it were made to comprise the *Eumenides*, the *Oedipus at Colonos*, and the *Supplices* of Euripides, or any other play (such as the *Medea*) in which Athenian patriotism is indirectly appealed to.

(4) Corinth, although so long a centre of Hellenic life, and the birthplace of the dithyramb, does not appear to have been rich in tragic legends. The punishment of Sisyphus in the underworld was the subject of an Aeschylean mystery-play (*vid. supra*), and the stories of Bellerophon and Polyidus had to do with Corinth. Otherwise, except as remotely associated with Oedipus, Alcmaeon, Glaucus, and perhaps Europa, the city, though the cradle of the dithyramb, plays an unimportant part in tragedy.

With regard to this whole subject it must be borne in mind that, throughout the great period, the local hero was to the common apprehension still a living power, the object of a reverence yet more intense than was felt by the English of the Tudor times for those great ones of the past whose names were "familiar in their mouths as

household words, Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloster." In their every thought of him religious and patriotic interests were combined.

2. Panhellenic Subjects.

(1) *Connected with the Trojan Expedition.*

Tragic fables drawn from "the Tale of Troy divine" are too numerous to be fully particularised. The following list must suffice :—

Aeschylus—

Achilles in Scyros.
* Agamemnon.
Hector's Ransom.
Lemnians (?).
Myrmidons or Nereids.
Palamedes.
Penelope.
Philoctetes.
Telephus.
Thracian Handmaids. (This and the Adjudication of the Arms belong equally to Attic legend.)

Sophocles—

Besides the * Ajax (already mentioned).

Achaeans' Concourse.
Achilles in Scyros.

Achilles' Lovers.
Ajax Locrus.
Auge (Birth of Telephus).
Captive Maidens.
Chryses.
Death of Odysseus.
Dolopes.
Eumelus.
Euryalus.
Hermione.
Laconian Handmaids (of Helen).
Laocoön.
Memnon.
Nauplius.
Nausicaa.
Niptra (Recognition of Odysseus).
Odysseus feigning madness.
Polyxena.
Palamedes.
Phaeacians.
* Philoctetes.
Priam.
Phthiotides.
Reclamation of Helen.
Shepherds.
Sons of Antenor.
Telephus.
Troïlus.
Tyndareus.

Euripides—

Alexander (*i.e.* Paris).
Epeius.
* Hecuba.
* Helena.
Palamedes.
Philoctetes.
Protesilaus.
* Rhesus (?).
Telephus.
* Trojan Women.

Other titles of plays connected with the fall of Troy are mentioned by Aristotle, of which *Sinon* and *Neoptolemus* are the most suggestive.

Aristotle, in the passage just referred to, observes that while three or four fables at most are taken from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the *Cypria* supplied many, and the *Iliupersis* (or "Sack of Troy") no fewer than eight.

It is indeed manifest that, as the late Professor Paley was never weary of insisting, the so-called "echoes of Homer" in the tragedians are much rather echoes from lost poems of the Epic Cycle; and if the term "Homeric" be taken in the more extended sense, the list above given shows that the epithet Philhomerus ("lover of Homer"), as applied to Sophocles, was more justifiable than the saying attributed to Aeschylus, that his dramas

were but "snatches from the mighty banquet of Homer."

The choice of the later epics as a quarry to draw from need surprise no one who remembers Dryden's hesitancy in preferring Shakespeare to Fletcher, or who has realised the force of the Homeric lines:

> τὴν μὲν ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι
> ἥ τις ἀειδόντεσσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται.
>
> Men ever celebrate that strain of song
> That moves most newly on the singer's tongue.

The Cyclic poet more frequently celebrated the deeds of Attic heroes, and was therefore more popular in Attica. Or even if confessedly inferior, his works might all the more be reckoned "good to steal from."[1] The very nature of the Cycle, as a series of narratives without poetic unity, would be conducive to this.

But while epic poetry, including the Cycle, was largely used, it is important to remember that the poet had other sources at his command. He did not go to the rhapsodist for a subject, but having chosen a subject, he borrowed from existing rhapsodies. He was the ally of priests and prophets, and himself exercised a kind of priesthood. Such men were always learned in oral tradition (λόγιοι). A worship like that of

[1] As Fuseli said of W. Blake.

Dionysus at Eleutherae or of Demeter at Eleusis was sure to become the focus of a great body of legend, which must have lived orally, whether poets had given shape to it or not. And in one of the latest efforts of the great period, the *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles, the aged poet lingers with all the fondness of a priest for his peculiar shrine over the details of a local ritual and mythology to which he was perhaps the first to give poetic form.

(2) *The Voyage of the Argonauts.*

There is no mention of an early "Argonautica," yet it seems unlikely that the expedition should have remained so long uncelebrated in epic verse. The legends connected with it have at all events given rise to a large and important group of tragic subjects. Here, as before, Sophocles is the chief borrower. The principal fables which may be grouped under the present heading are—

Argo	Aesch.	...	...
Athamas	Aesch.	Soph.	...
Cabiri	Aesch.	...	...
Colchian Women	...	Soph.	...
Euryalus	...	Soph.	...
Ino	...	...	Eur.
Iobates (Phrynichus).			
Lemnian Women	...	Soph.	...

Medea	...	...	Eur.
Peleus	...	Soph.	...
Peliades	...	...	Eur.
Pelias	...	Soph.	Eur.
Phineus	Aesch.	Soph.	...
Phrixus	...	Soph.	Eur.
Root-Gatherers	...	Soph.	...
Scythians	...	Soph.	...
Tympanistae	...	Soph.	...
Tyro	...	Soph.	...

(3) *The Calydonian Hunt.*

To this group belong—

Atalanta	Aesch.	...	Eur.
Hipponoüs	...	Soph.	...
Melanippè	...	...	Eur.
Meleager	...	Soph.	Eur.
Oeneus	...	Soph. (?)	Eur.

Pleuronians (Phrynichus).

This class of subjects was more frequent with later poets.

3. Miscellaneous Subjects.

There remain a few subjects taken from uncertain sources, and slightly, if at all, connected with the great interests hitherto considered. Such are—

	Aeolus	...	...	Eur.
	Aletes	...	Soph.	...
	Callisto[1]	Aesch.	...	...
A Cretan cycle perhaps remotely related to the person of Theseus.	Camicii	...	Soph.	...
	Minos	...	Soph.	...
	Cresphontes	...	...	Eur.
	Ixion	Aesch.	Soph.	Eur.
	Lamia (a Cyrenaic myth?)			Eur.
	Thamyras[2]	...	Soph.	...

[1] Probably connected with the Arcadian Artemis.
[2] The worship of the Muses was associated with that of Dionysus.

CHAPTER V

CONDITIONS OF REPRESENTATION [1]

EVERY Athenian drama was originally composed for competitive performance before the whole body of the Athenian citizens assembled, in broad daylight, at the spring festival of Dionysus. The place was at the south-east corner of the Acropolis, near the temple of Dionysus. The gathering had all the appearance of an ekklesia,[2] or public assembly, except that women and boys were present,[3] and also that on either side of the archons and the strategi in the front seats were ranged a goodly company of priests, who marked the religious character of the solemnity—the priest of Dionysus Eleuthereus being seated in the centre.

The whole people drawn together under a

[1] Books to consult: Haigh's *Attic Theatre*; Smith's *Dict. of Ant.*, third edition, art. "Theatrum"; A. Müller's *Bühnenalterthümer* (German).

[2] See Aristotle's *Ath. Const.* It is doubtful if *new* plays were ever performed elsewhere—*e.g.* at Salamis, *vid. ibid.*

[3] Plat. *Gorg.* 502 D; *Laws*, ii. 658.

religious and also a civic sanction; business suspended for several days; all minds together bent upon a keen enjoyment which came only once a year;—how different from the modern night-performances before a casual audience of a few hundreds, whom chance or inclination brings to one of many "houses" to look by gas-light at a piece which has been acted nightly by the same actors for great part of a year!

In an area holding many thousands, however closely packed in concentric circles, it is obvious that a drama, to be seen and heard and followed, must have the greatest simplicity and clearness. Complicated situations, number and variety of characters, incidents diverting attention from the main business, underplots and unexplained transitions,[1] are excluded by the conditions of the spectacle. Thus outward causes conspired with the native bent of Attic genius in imposing on the poet and the actors alike the necessity for directness and unity of effect. And hence, while for spectacular and choral business not the Chorus only but large numbers of supernumeraries were often employed, giving a grand impression of massiveness and collective strength, the purely dramatic dialogue was distributed amongst a very few; three *actors* at most, with rare exceptions, being at any one time present in the scene. This

[1] Aristotle's *Poet.* 1455 a: ὃ ἐπετιμᾶτο Καρκίνῳ.

was not due to poverty of invention, still less to any parsimony of the *choregi*, but remained as a persistent rule.

The tragic mask with its ὄγκος (or protuberant forehead) and speaking-tube, and the cothurnus with its high soles, the padding of the chest, helping to exaggerate stature, voice, and figure, and the flute giving continuous support to vocal effort, were also felt to be necessities in the vast area. It is to be remembered that the spectators had no opera-glasses. All these conditions together constituted alike for poet and actor a difficulty which was also an opportunity. It is evident that in such passages as the defiance of Prometheus,[1] or the avowal of Clytemnestra,[2] they may have aided the elevation of the style. But it is also clear that they must have militated against modulation and variety. Any other than Greek artists so circumstanced would have overstepped the modesty of nature. The grandiloquence of early tragedy was felt by the contemporaries of Aristophanes to lie open to this charge. His Aeschylus is accused of bombast by Euripides in the *Frogs*, and replies that the heroes, being sons of gods, were likely to speak grandly. A similar reply was made by a Japanese informant to M. George Bousquet, when he inquired into the nature of theatrical exhibitions in Japan.[3]

[1] Aesch. *Prom. V. s. f.* [2] Aesch. *Agam.* 1372.
[3] *Revue des deux Mondes*, 15me *Août* 1874.

His remarks are curious and instructive, and may be quoted here—

"Pourquoi," demandais-je à un acteur en renom, le célèbre Sodjaro, "faites-vous de si grands éclats de voix et de si grands gestes dans vos rôles tragiques? Ce n'est pas ainsi, ce me semble, que parle et qu'agit un daïmio ou un soldat." "Non," me répondit-il; "mais s'ils se comportaient sur la scène comme tout le monde, qui pourrait reconnaître en eux des héros?" Cette réponse contient à la fois le secret de l'art scénique et celui de l'art dramatique des Japonais. Ils sentent confusément qu'au-dessus du niveau commun des passions humaines il s'en agite de plus fortes et de plus nobles qui appartiennent au domaine du drame,—qu'au-dessus de l'homme vulgaire et banal il y en a un autre qu'il faut decouvrir et representer. En un mot, ils cherchent l'idéal; mais, c'est dans cette recherche même qu'ils s'égarent. L'extrême Orient, il faut bien le dire, n'a pas connu la beauté simple et nue des Grecs, apanage de la race âryenne; la conception du monde supérieur ne s'est jamais pour lui traduite que par l'informe grossissement du réel. Au-delà de la trivialité journalière, il n'a trouvé que le monstre. Il a cru faire beau en faisant énorme—obtenir l'admiration en causant la stupeur, et toucher par l'effroi.[1]

Judging from the actual remains of Greek tragedy, it cannot be said that in aiming at the ideal they ever landed in extravagance, although to his successors the greatest of the poets might appear too simply magniloquent. As has been already hinted,[2] the Attic spectator must have learned in great measure to discount the

[1] Cp. Aristoph. *Ranae*, 1060 (ed. Meineke).

[2] Page 36.

encumbrances of the stage, and to "piece out" the actors' imperfections "with his thoughts"—

> Minding true things by what their mockeries be.

While any art is young, imagination answers generously to the artist's demands (see, *e.g.* the pictures by Old Masters in which several stages of a story are given together), above all when he works through language, the most elastic and pliable of all art-media. So, though the performance was in the open day, the action might be represented as commencing in the grey dawn,[1] or even at dead of night.[2] The approach of night may be apprehended as imminent, yet by and by men will speak as in presence of the Sun,[3] who in the *Phaëthon* of Euripides, again, as we have seen, was personated in his own sight. In the *Psychagogi*, on the other hand, the Chorus of Cimmerians must have been imagined as never seeing the sun.

Rapid movement must have been impossible for one booted with the cothurnus. Yet swift approaches and departures are represented and remarked. Fine shades of facial expression must in any case have been lost in that large space, and all attempt at producing such effects must have been impossible with the mask. Yet it is

[1] *Antigone.* [2] *Agamemnon.* [3] *Choëphoroe.*

clear that something answering to "by-play" was not unknown. When Oedipus first begins to realise the horror of his situation, Jocasta says to him—

I shudder as I gaze on thee, O King.[1]

There must have been something in his attitude to give the cue for this remark, and something in her gesture suited to it. When Clytemnestra remains silent after Electra's accusing speech, the Chorus interpose with the observation, "I see her fuming with fresh wrath."[2] These words would have been absurd if something in Clytemnestra's bearing had not corresponded. The fact is confirmed by the evidence of Pollux, who gives παρένδειξις as a term of tragic art—manifestly nothing else than "by-play." Yet the actor's art must have been different from anything known amongst ourselves. There are delicate modulations of voice and shades of facial expression which are possible in a private room but useless in a theatre. A still greater difference divided the ancient from the modern stage. Such changes of attitude, for example, as those above referred to, marking critical points in the action, must have been maintained for a considerable time, to enable the whole body of the spectators to realise them. Frequent movement and gesticulation

[1] *Oed. Tyr.* 745. [2] Soph. *El.* 610.

would have been meaningless, even if the cothurnus, the padded bust, and the trailing robe had not impeded motion. One can readily understand how the notion of Achilles pursuing Hector on the stage suggested itself to Aristotle as the height of absurdity. The grouped figures thus, as it were, brought nearer to the eye (in the absence of magnifying lenses) must often have seemed as still as in a *tableau vivant*—the "dumb personages" (κῶφα πρόσωπα) and other supernumeraries adding to the effect. The actor was a sort of speaking statue, or at least one who in motion, voice, and gesture resembled Aristotle's magnanimous man, whose gait is slow and his voice monotonous and deep. The whole scene bore a majestic resemblance to the marble reliefs with which in later times the stage was adorned, much as the Panathenaic procession saw itself reflected in the Parthenon frieze. It by no means follows that the effect produced was mechanical or unnatural. It should rather be said that the expression of sustained passion under these conditions required an intensity of realisation such as few even of the greatest actors have ever displayed. To maintain with dignified pose and gesture the character which the poet intended, and which the maker of the mask had stamped in statuesque nobility upon the face; to make felt by every one of the 30,000 spectators the significance of every

change, and above all, through the slow and measured rhythm, which alone could be followed by such a multitude, to carry home the warmth and vehemence of strong emotion, must have required powers and accomplishments of no mean order. Declamation, whether in recitation, recitative, or song (*καταλογή, παρακαταλογή, ᾠδή*), must have been of the first importance; and it is only natural that to make a voice (*φωνασκεῖν*) was an indispensable pre-requisite.

As to "looking the part," so far as features were concerned that task was left to the mask-modeller (*προσωποποιός*), who must have had something of the statuary's skill. An Ajax or a Heracles, a Clytemnestra or an Antigone, had all the individuality that art could give them, although the living play denoting various moods could not be there, and in any case would have been useless.[1] But the mask must have been changed after a change of fortune. Not only the self-blinded Oedipus, but Deianira on discovering her error, Creon accompanying Haemon's body, Clytemnestra making her avowal, must have worn an altered look. The face of the Messenger in *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1366 must have shown traces of the blows he had received. It is strange to think that the Furies in Aeschylus when they

[1] "Anatomy of expression" (Sir Charles Bell's happy phrase) was not yet thought of.

remain to bless have the same faces as at their entrance. Perhaps a different section of the Chorus came into prominence in the latter portion of the play.

The position of the Chorus in the orchestra and their evolutions there made them a mediating element between the spectators and the action, while the intense concentration of the dialogue added charm to the lyrical interludes, which did not interrupt the drama, but on the one hand linked it to common life, and on the other gave utterance within due limits to the feelings which its progress so far had awakened.

Two expedients connected with the unity of scene remain to be spoken of: the speech of the Messenger, and the *ekkyklema* (or "discovery").

1. By means of narration things done at a distance or within doors are brought to the ears of the spectators without being presented to their eyes, and an effect is produced like that of perspective in drawing. The composition thus acquires depth and harmony without losing unity.—The ancient like the modern dramatist has also recourse to exclamations and brief utterances from "within."

2. The ekkyklema was employed when some great impression could only be produced through a tableau presenting to the eye not things in act but the results of action. Clytemnestra beside her murdered lord, Ajax among the slaughtered

cattle, Orestes with his mother's corpse, the dead Eurydicè, are thus rolled forth from the central door of the fixed scene to the view of the spectators, who, by a somewhat tyrannous convention, are bound to suppose that what they see is not outside the house but within. The incongruity, however, was softened by distance, and this effect might be increased by the help of perspective.

The unity of scene, which was due to the exclusiveness of ancient civic life, as well as to the presence of the Chorus, was not an absolutely invariable rule. The scene changes after the prologue in the *Phoenissae*, and perhaps in the *Oedipus Coloneus*; and the Chorus are temporarily withdrawn and enter on a new scene in the *Eumenides* and *Ajax*. And the fact that Pollux has special terms for such an exit (μετάστασις) and re-entrance (ἐπιπάροδος) seems to indicate that the expedient must have been employed more widely (probably in the *Phaëthon*, for example). There is a passage in the *Helena* of Euripides (386-514) where it seems to be required. Menelaus enters and tells his story, which the Chorus would have no motive for concealing, except to aid the plot, which is against their interests. See also Eur. *Alc.* 747-860.

We may be quite sure (however strange it may be thought) that none of these external conditions,

although some of them were gradually disused, were allowed to interfere with dramatic illusion. But they were not without their effect on the poet, who in the earlier time himself took a part amongst the actors, and retained the office of instructing them to the last. He had no room for copiousness in the development of situation or character ; his success depended on the force with which he could present the essential points of the action by means of strong and clearly marked effects. Thus outward causes joined with the spirit of Athenian art in banishing superfluities and encouraging simplicity, directness, concentration, and unity.

Until recently, descriptions of the Greek theatre were based on the canons of Vitruvius and a superficial view of the remains of the Dionysiac theatre at Athens. The more thorough examination of those remains, and skilled investigations at Epidaurus, Megalopolis, Eretria, and elsewhere, have raised important questions which are not yet solved. Dr. Dörpfeld, who has the advantage of being an expert at once in archæology and architecture, has propounded a theory, which, even if ultimately invalidated, cannot fail to modify existing notions.

According to him, Vitruvius erred in assuming that the Greek proscenium corresponded to the Roman pulpitum or stage. The *προσκήνιον*,

he thinks, was only a somewhat late mode of decorating the scene. The stage was a surviving segment of the orchestra. No part of the existing structure at Athens is allowed by him to be older than the building of Lycurgus (341 B.C.), which was altered at successive periods down to the third century A.D. The only exception to this sweeping statement is made in favour of two bits of stone basement of polygonal work forming arcs of a circle near the site of the temple of Dionysus, and preserving the traces of an earlier orchestra.

The beautiful theatre at Epidaurus, said by Pausanias to be the work of Polycleitus, thus becomes of special importance. The orchestra here is a complete circle, not cut by the proscenium, whose basement, or "stylobate," is raised some inches above the level of the orchestra. According to the new theory, the actor stepped down in front of this, and all the action took place on the same level. The exact age of this part of the structure, especially of the pillars, has not been determined. And much depends on the yet unfinished excavations at Megalopolis.

While the decision is thus pending, a scholar who "cannot dig" can only venture provisionally to offer a few general remarks.

1. It seems rather a strong measure to set aside the authority of Vitruvius, who wrote not

later than about the middle of the first century A.D. His rules on this and other points were not capriciously adopted, nor drawn from mere inspection of architectural diagrams, but must have been to a large extent traditional. No doubt particular theatres—at Epidaurus for example—varied somewhat from the general *norm* which he recognises. But the radical error attributed to him by the new theory appears unlikely. And there are places in Aristophanes which are scarcely intelligible without the raised stage (*e.g. Eccl.* 1152). (But see Prof. White in *Harvard Studies.*)

2. On the other hand, there are many things in the existing plays which are hard to reconcile with a narrow proscenium or stage of from ten to twelve feet high.

The entrance of Atossa, or of Agamemnon and Cassandra, with chariots and other pomp, could hardly be accommodated to the conditions hitherto supposed.

And many scenes may be recalled, not only from the earlier plays of Aeschylus, but from the *Choëphoroe* and *Eumenides*, from several plays of Euripides and Aristophanes, and even from the last of Sophocles, proving that throughout the fifth century B.C. the communication at certain points of the action between the actors and the Chorus was of a kind that would be seriously interrupted by a long flight of steps (*Oed. Col.* 836).

3. But, thirdly, the distinction between the two or three ὑποκριταὶ and the other χορευταὶ is generally sharp and distinct, and there would be a manifest awkwardness in maintaining the chief dialogue either within the circle of the orchestra or generally in the space before the proscenium, which was intersected by the stone edge of the dancing-ring. It would be too hampering, especially for one booted with the cothurnus, either to have to move inside a hoop or to step over it backwards from time to time.

4. An attempt to meet the difficulty has been made by supposing that for dramatic performances, as distinguished from mere choral competitions, the Chorus were provided with a temporary wooden stage, not much below the level of the proscenium. This view is not without support from documents, but cannot be proved for the fifth century B.C. See A. Müller, *Bühnenalterth.* § 11, p. 129.

5. In the absence of direct evidence from stone and lime, all theories are alike unverifiable. All woodwork has disappeared. (Cp. τὴν σύμφραξιν in inscr. quoted *Classical Rev.* vol. v. p. 344 a.) But the following hypothesis may be advanced as not glaringly inconsistent either with architectural or literary documents.

"At the beginning of the fifth century B.C. the orchestra was a complete circle, as at

Epidaurus, with the Thymele or altar of Dionysus in the centre. Whether or not the Coryphaeus sometimes stood upon the step of the altar is an immaterial point. But the ὑποκριτὴς (or "Answerer") had already a place assigned to him, facing the audience and slightly raised, upon the farther side of the orchestra;[1] and some simple structure, representing a house or temple, made a background for him. There was already a rudimentary stage as well as a rudimentary scene. Aeschylus, who introduced the second actor, probably in other ways made more significant the place of the action. The stage was as yet but slightly elevated above the orchestra, and when circumstances required, not the Chorus only, but other persons, might enter by the side opening and easily step on to the platform where most of the dialogue took place."

Sophocles is known to have made some great advance in scene-painting. But this must have been anterior to the production of the Oresteia and of the Promethean trilogy, both of which require elaborate scenery. The *Prometheus Bound* also involves the use of machinery for bringing on divine persons, and of stage thunder; while the ekkyklema is in full use in the Oresteia. In the *Persae*, 472 B.C., there must have been some

[1] The place of the audience on one side of the ring must soon have been defined by the necessity of facing the chief speaker.

contrivance by which the ghost of Darius rose behind his tomb.

Whether we accept the tradition that at the beginning of the fifth century stone seats were substituted for the wooden benches, or reject it with Dörpfeld, it is natural to suppose that in the hundred years and more which elapsed before the building of Lycurgus other important changes may have taken place. The auditorium was probably enlarged from time to time, and the centre of the orchestra shifted inwards to the north as the seats were cut more deeply into the hill. It is not unnatural to assume that coincidently with this process there may have been at once a deepening of the orchestra and a gradual raising of the proscenium, and of the whole *σκηνή*, partly for the sake of sound, and partly in order to present the chief persons, with their surroundings, more advantageously to the average spectator.

First, the one step would become three or four; then, when this was not enough, a regular *hypo-scenium* would be developed and adorned with pillars, rising to ten or twelve feet, as in the scheme of Vitruvius. The flights of steps at either end would then become a necessity; and the awkwardness of the interruptions which they occasioned would be less felt, because the Chorus was by this time less important as an element of the action.

The narrowness of the Greek proscenium—six or seven feet—may still occur as an objection to the above hypothesis. But granting that it involves some formality of grouping that appears stiff from a modern point of view, this would be little felt in the earlier and more creative period while the elevation of the stage was slight and the use of the side entrance was free. And the slight difference of level would give a clear advantage in marking out the chief persons and distinguishing the dialogue from the choral business. A degree of elevation which lost all significance as the auditorium grew wider and higher would be quite perceptible from the ἴκρια or wooden platform, which is now assumed to have held the spectators in the early part of the fifth century B.C. The narrow stage had acoustic uses and left more room for purely choric contests.

Another objection may be founded on the apparition of Darius, the sinking of Prometheus, etc., which could no doubt be better managed with a high proscenium. But this might be provided "for the nonce" by the tomb of Darius, the rock of Prometheus, etc., being raised to a certain height above the stage.

CHAPTER VI

LEADING THOUGHTS: EARLY PESSIMISM—MORALITY AND DESTINY—INTERPRETATIONS OF LIFE—CENTRAL THOUGHTS [1]

As above remarked (in Chap. I.), completeness is an attribute of all tragedy; every great tragedy deals with some life-history regarded as a whole, and as typical of a whole, *i.e.* of human life considered in some universal aspect; and tragic effects are produced not merely through feeling, but through feeling combined with reflection. From this it is obvious that a great tragic poem must be the outcome not merely of emotional sympathy but of intellectual energy. The poet must have thought deeply, and his work must be the sincere expression of his thought. This does not mean that he is to moralise, or that his heroes are to preach after the fashion of Godwin's Antonio.[2] By *expression* is of course meant dramatic expression

[1] Books to consult: Bunsen's *God in History*; Julia Wedgwood's *Moral Ideal*; Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*; Günther's *Tragische Kunst* (German).

[2] Lamb's *Elia*.

or embodiment; and the less of self-consciousness there is in this the better for the work.

Like the kindred arts of dancing, singing, and epic recitation, Greek tragedy adhered to certain conventional lines. But within the limits prescribed by tradition it enjoyed greater freedom than any. This was partly due to its Dionysiac origin, and partly to the fact that its main development coincided with the rise of national and political freedom at Athens. It was the awakening and deepening both of the collective and individual consciousness that gave to tragedy, as a function of Greek life, its peculiar distinction. For, after all, the fact that the art had a religious basis was common to it with every phase of existence, however mean or frivolous. Athletics, boat-races, cock- and quail-fights, the broaching of a wine-cask, the prosecution of a love-affair, all were associated with religion. It is not in this sense that one speaks of Aeschylus as a religious poet. The distinguishing characteristic of tragic poetry was that it reflected the deepest thoughts of an expansive and transitional time.

In two previous chapters we have considered the subjects of tragedy, the legends which were its raw material, and surveyed the outward conditions under which the poet worked. We have now to turn from the husk to the kernel, from the

framework to the animating principle, and to inquire into the spirit which informed it, the ideas which guided it.

No simple result is to be looked for in this inquiry; because in an age in which many ideas were germinating each poet had his own ideal, his own way of regarding human life. Hence even the serious side of Greek drama is not uniform in tone. The aspect of nature and of destiny varies with the temper of the individual dramatist. Still less can the scope of tragic art be summed up in such a formula as that of—

> poor humanity's afflicted will
> Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny.[1]

In Chapter III. I tried to distinguish between the origin and growth of tragedy. I would now mark the difference between the data and the genius that handles them: between tragic commonplaces and tragic motives. A tragic poem may be compared to a piece of embroidery in which a pattern is wrought with many-coloured threads upon a sombre ground. The ground represents the data—the traditional deposit; the pattern is the poet's own thought.

It has been truly said that "under the marble exterior of Greek literature was concealed a soul

[1] Wordsworth.

thrilling with spiritual emotion."[1] And it is not less true that beneath the Greek serenity and brightness there lay, thinly veiled, a profound sadness, which, as Hegel has said, "knows the hardness of fate, but is not by that knowledge driven out of freedom and measure."

This consciousness of "some undercurrent woe" will not appear unnatural if we consider the probable condition of "what is now called Hellas" (as Thucydides says) in times between the Trojan war and the legislation of Solon. That condition must have often resembled the state of Germany after the Thirty Years' War. Civilisation was just emerging from the mere struggle for existence. The inhabitant of the plain might at any time have his crops ravaged or his cattle driven off by predatory tribes from the hills. The beginnings of commerce were all but stifled by piracy. Now and again some strong personality would arise and protect the weak while plundering the plunderers, like Rob Roy or Robin Hood. And so dynasties arose which left their mark and were long remembered for good or evil. But by-and-by the oligarchs in their turn were threatened by some combination of the common folk. Then it was their turn to cry that the good old times were over and gone—that base men were supplanting

[1] Jowett's *Plato*, Introduction to *Phaedrus*, *s. f.*

the better sort, and life was no longer worth living.

The misery and nothingness of human life had already been a frequent theme of reflection even in epic poetry—

> Of all that live and move upon the ground,
> No thing more sad than mortal man is found.

"Man has no comfort in mourning, save to shear the locks, and to let fall the tear." Amidst the brightness and vividness of the *Iliad* this ever-recurring strain, that the noble and the vile alike must die, affects us with strong and simple pathos. The burden of all the later books, "Achilles' doom is ripe when Hector falls," gives a wonderful sense of transiency to the whole long poem. The counterpart of this is the undying power of the Olympian gods.

In Hesiod we find a detailed account of actual human misery, with a deeper feeling about wrong and injustice, than commonly occurs in Homer, accompanied with a kindred awe towards superhuman powers, which are more definitely but less grandly conceived. A similar strain is continued in Theognis, who cries, "Far best were never to be born, next best to die forthwith"; in Pindar, who exclaims that "Man is the dream of a shadow"; and it is echoed here and there in Plato. But it is in the Ionic literature of Asia Minor

that the darker aspect of human life is most clearly formulated, together with a strange phase of theological pessimism. Beneath that graceful and gay civilisation, amidst all its command of resources, its perfect climate, its progress in the arts of life, there lay the abiding consciousness of some overhanging doom—with the inference that "ere it came it was but fair that life should be enjoyed." Those words, in which Thucydides expresses the feeling of the Athenians at the time of the plague, might sum up what we know of the poetry of Mimnermus of Colophon (634-600 B.C.) Whether this sense of instability was in any way connected with the position of the Ionians under the shadow first of Lydian and then of Persian supremacy, or whether it arose in any way through the infiltration of ideas from farther East, it is clearly present not only in the philosophy of Heraclitus (called in later times the "weeping philosopher"), the philosophy of eternal change, but in the history of Herodotus, who, with all his serenity and evenness of spirit, is profoundly penetrated with three great thoughts—the predominant misery of human life, the absoluteness of Fate, the envy and cruelty of the gods. He has also occasionally notions of another order from these, which he does not see to be at variance with them—the inevitable retribution which awaits the perjurer (once darkly hinted at in Homer) and

the vengeance which long afterwards overtakes the doer of a wrong, besides many wise proverbial maxims which had been gathered from the experience which he records.

That every man has cause oftentimes to prefer death to life; that the good man is often crushed by the decree of Heaven; yea, even, like Mycerinus, on account of his goodness; that none can be called happy before he dies, because the divine nature is envious and delights in confusion, are thoughts which might evidently become the basis of a certain kind of tragedy. And if the true aim of this art had been to detach the spectator from the will to live,[1] to teach the lesson of absolute resignation, to convince him that there is nothing in the world worth living for, then these conceptions proved the time already ripe for tragedy at once to attain her goal. But as it happens—and this is an essential point—Greek tragedy is not the offspring of an outworn age, nor of the sickliness incident to youth, that "will be as sad as night only for wantonness." It is not the product of exhaustion, but of fulness, not of a world-weariness like that of Byron, but of the spirit that "sufficeth unto all and more than all,"[2] of the Attic genius at the time when Athens had the firmest hold on life. And

[1] See Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. i. § 51.

[2] ἐξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγίνεται.—Heraclitus.

in the heyday of Athenian greatness, to the men who could put forth such boundless energy for Hellas and for Athens, the cry that "All is vanity," that "it is better not to be," that "man that is born of a woman hath but few days and is full of misery,"—thoughts kindred to these, familiar to them from the gnomic poetry, were like an echo from the past, that thrilled them with a mysterious awe, but carried only an imperfect meaning. It was because life had such high value for them that they were fascinated with the contemplation of traditional or ideal calamities. If the poet who plucked asunder for them the jaws of darkness and unveiled the world of gloom had had no more to teach them than that "the gods are hard to reconcile," and that "man is the dream of a shadow," the fascination would soon have palled or cloyed them. But, whatever may have been true of earlier poets, both Aeschylus and Sophocles were yet more profoundly convinced than the Athenians were that there are things worth living for, ay, and things one had better die than lose; and this not in some far-off, mysterious, transcendental sense (though they had their mysticisms), but in a sense which every true Athenian heart could recognise. Which is there amongst their extant plays that does not affirm the endless worth of home, of country, of religion, of domestic purity, of civic freedom, of faithfulness,

of personal honour, of humanity, or of piety? And is it not because these motives are weakened in Euripides—because the bases of civic virtue have been shaken, and those of individual and personal morality have not yet been firmly laid, that his work fails of inherent unity and grandeur?

It is true that the moral ideal here presented to us is one which cannot be abstracted from the family and the state.[1] But in this consists the advance beyond the Homeric period, which such a work as the *Oresteia* evinces, viz. that the sanctity attaching to the domestic hearth and to the national spirit has sunk so much more deeply into the consciousness of the time. In this respect the *Odyssey* is in advance of the *Iliad*, and Aeschylus is in advance of the *Odyssey*.

To the poet these thoughts were more than to his countrymen, for it was through these that he communicated ideas which transcend the limits of Greek nationality and are of universal value. In their apprehension of the ideas of justice and purity, and to some extent also of equity, of mercy, and of truthfulness, Aeschylus and Sophocles rose far above the contemporary standard. If in one way they are Greeks of the Greeks, in another they are more than Greeks, and have voices that

[1] What the best sort of Athenian was apart from his country is well seen in the conduct of Phrynichus at Samos, compared with Thucydides' eulogy of his character (Thuc. viii. 27, 50, 51).

reach to all time, sounding as they do in consonance with Hebrew prophecy. To ask reasons for this would carry us far and over doubtful ground. It may well be that the Eleusinian worship contained elements other and deeper than those of the public religions, and that Aeschylus, if he betrayed the mysteries, sinned, like his own Prometheus, in the cause of a noble philanthropy. It may be that through Orphic or Pythagorean channels there flowed a purer ethical teaching than the common opinion of Athens had yet acknowledged. But whatever may be thought of antecedents, at which we can but dimly guess, the fact is plain that among the Athenians of the early fifth century the higher spirits had an assurance, to which their poets sought to give effect, that an essential righteousness lay deep in the divine counsels, and that sin (in the form of injustice) was the prime cause of suffering. They also felt that the essentially noble human being, though he might err and be unfortunate, must in the end be justified. In the gradual and fitful growth of these moral ideas within the outward form of fatalistic legend lies one chief interest of the history of Greek tragedy. The poet stands behind his work, and his own thought shines through, either as a light pervading the whole, though nowhere expressly manifested, or breaking forth at intervals.

It may be observed, however, in passing that the more nearly the drama approximates to its ideal objectivity, the less obvious becomes the poet's general conception, which in the most perfect dramas is to be inferred from the whole treatment, and not sought for in any of the parts. Not in the moral maxims, which the persons utter in accordance with their situation and character, nor even always in the lyrical effusions, which, as the treatment of the Chorus becomes more dramatic, are more apt to be confined to a single aspect of the action, but in the action itself, is the thought of the poet, if he has a leading thought, to be found. And it is important to remark that this thought is inextricably bound up with imagination and feeling, and inevitably becomes different the moment an attempt is made to give it logical expression.

But to return. The idea of Fate was not, as has often been assumed, the exclusive or even the most active principle in Greek tragedy. It is the warp of the texture, but not the woof; the site, but not the framework of the building; the background of the picture, not its leading motive. It is there, like the power of the curse, like the prophetic gift of Apollo—a deposit of anterior tradition, invaluable as material, or as an instrument of tragic effect, but is employed differently according to the idiosyncrasy of the poet, and the

aspect of the time-spirit which he embodies. To the poet, as to his audience, these dark traditions had a real and terrible meaning; but his mind was also instinct with other and more living conceptions, by which these were crossed and modified. And if thoughts of retribution were still excessive, and righteousness seemed inseparable from vindictiveness, this was partly because of the profound impression produced by the revelation of the heinousness of wrong. The morality is an incipient morality; but it is not less real and deep. And it is the struggle of morality with fatalism that gives to Greek tragedy its most abiding charm. Nor does the vindictiveness just spoken of, however essentially inherent in the ancient ideal, strike its roots so deep or occupy the ground so widely as is sometimes assumed. If Oedipus had learned to forgive his enemies, he would not less have found peace in the ultimate vindication of his essential innocence in the sight of Heaven.

The assertion of Baron Bunsen, however, in his *God in History*,[1] that "nowhere has the fundamental idea of tragedy been conceived more profoundly, or expressed more magnificently, than by those poets—namely, that self-seeking is the destructive element, and that tragic complications are the product of transgressions of due balance,

[1] Eng. Translation, p. 175.

and of moral demerit," has too much of a modern tone, and though suggestive of much valuable truth respecting certain tragedies, such as the *Choëphoroe* or the *Ajax*, is not exhaustive, even of the ethical element in Greek tragedy.

It is impossible to treat this subject fairly or at all fully without distinguishing carefully between the three great tragic poets. Yet it is difficult to do this without anticipating what will be more in place in the chapters to be given separately to each of them. The main differences in their treatment of these central ideas may, however, be stated in a few sentences.

1. Aeschylus is no pessimist, though some of his chief persons are surrounded with gloom. His fatalism is not exclusive of free will. Human life was to him the scene of a warfare between good and evil principles, in which it depended, under Heaven, on man himself whether the good or the evil triumphed in a particular generation. In the long run the triumph of justice was assured. Had not Hellas triumphed over Persia? And had she not to thank for this first of all the powers of light who fought for her, and then the principles of liberty, law, equity, patriotism, and household purity which prevailed above all in Athens? Of all this Aeschylus is profoundly convinced, and he dwells on those features of each legend which are most calculated to impress on the spectator the

realities in which he believed—pride, not merely prosperity, preparing downfall; sin leading to retribution either soon or late; the curse of heredity not irredeemable, but even when it falls giving scope for the display of moral grandeur; the conflict of opposing principles resulting in that growth of righteousness towards which all events lead on.

2. Sophocles accepts from Aeschylus the belief in supreme righteousness, which thus becomes part of tragic tradition; and in the spirit of Greek piety he identifies justice with the will of Zeus or of the gods generally. But the power of Fate, of which men in old time had spoken, is confirmed for him by the facts of life and acquires new meaning from them. Destiny, as now interpreted, is correlative to the ignorance and blindness of men, whom no innocence of intention will save from the consequences of their acts, as these are determined by the working of the eternal laws. The tragic persons of Aeschylus are preparing the way for the triumph of justice, which goes on with cumulative force from generation to generation—an increasing purpose which "through the ages runs." Those of Sophocles rather illustrate by their fall or by their rising again the unchanging purpose of a righteous but inscrutable power. For the rest, Sophocles, though he teaches through his art, is less bent than Aeschylus was on reading a

lesson to the spectators: he is entirely engrossed in adapting his fables to the production of great tragic effects of terror and pity. And, although not more than a tenth part of his work is extant, we can hardly be wrong in recognising in him, as in Shakespeare, a certain relaxation of tragic severity towards the close of his career. The lesson of the *Coloneus* is not anticipated in the *Tyrannus*; the tone of the *Philoctetes* is less unrelenting than that of the *Antigone*.

3. Euripides makes the pessimism of the old fables a vehicle for the opposition, rife in his time, between morality and mythology. He believes, somewhat intermittently, in a divine power governing human things, but one inseparable from nature and the mind of man. In representing the gods as cruel, capricious, vindictive, he is perhaps expressing his disbelief in them. But he is also accentuating, in a more bitter and querulous tone than Sophocles ever assumed, the blindness of Fortune and the frequent injustice of the actual distribution of happiness and misery in the world. "Nature" is relentless, and to individuals not always just.[1] The total effect of many Euripidean dramas must have been to send away the audience distressed and irritated rather than calmed and "quieted,"—an effect like that which the music of

[1] Compare Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, liv. lv., contrasted with cxvii.

Wagner produces on some persons as compared with that of Beethoven or Mozart.

Fate, the power of Zeus, Nemesis, the claims of the Erinyes and of the powers below, the prescience of Apollo, the wisdom of Athena, these are factors of the tragic art, with which the poet works, and disposes them differently according to the thoughts that dominate him and the requirements of his audience. This last condition is never to be forgotten, whether in speaking of the superficial or the deeper nature of tragedy.

The Greek of that age delighted in listening to life-histories, and he believed implicitly in the real presence of dead heroes, the patrons of his race. Both features of the time are manifest in the pages of Herodotus,[1] who also exemplifies the taste for gnomic sayings and for interspersing narrative with dialogue. The Athenian was in all these respects a child of the time, and was ready at the Dionysiac festival to brim over with sympathetic emotion. But he further demanded from the tragic poet that "emotion should be touched with thought." For in the Athens of the fifth century, more than ever elsewhere, human consciousness was struggling towards independent existence. Vivid national experiences had freshly

[1] It was only when smarting under disappointment that the Thebans sent back the Aeacidae to Aegina and asked for living men. —Herod. v. 81.

awakened various obstinate questionings about the meaning of life, the essential characteristics of human nature, and the purposes of the gods. Before philosophy had prepared her answer, the drama gave an imaginative embodiment to the successive contemporary phases of the mental struggle. The attainment of free citizenship and the successful repulse of Persia had the combined effect of intensifying the general interest in all things human. Hence at the annual festival of Dionysus, when the poet, according to religious wont, idealised for them some aspect of human sorrow (side by side with the exuberance of animal gladness), the people entered with new zest into the spirit of the representation, and realised with extreme vividness all the deep reflections and far-reaching thoughts which it evoked. But it is a mistake to assume any immediate connection between particular events of Greek history and the subjects chosen. The attempts which have been made in this direction by Mr. W. W. Lloyd and others have not been successful. The results are too thin and shadowy to produce conviction. The poet's choice had for the most part an artistic, not a political motive. The *Persae* and *Eumenides* of Aeschylus are no doubt inspired with Athenian patriotism ; but this was always ready to be called forth, and needed not any occasional motive for its expression. Such motives, even if they existed,

as we may imagine them to have done in the case, for instance, of the *Oedipus Coloneus*, as they undoubtedly do in that of the *Supplices* and *Heraclidae* of Euripides, are but slightly connected with the artistic result, which depends on independent laws of poetic and dramatic creation.[1]

Nor is the effort justifiable, though often made, to deduce the evolution of a tragic poem from some "ground-idea." There can be little doubt, for example, on which side the sympathies of Sophocles and his audience were in the struggle represented in the *Antigone*. But much of what has been said on the subject rests on the barren supposition that the poet starts with a clear-cut preference for the claims either of the state or of family-life, or else on the merely abstract notion that from the clashing of two principles equally divine, he is endeavouring to strike a harmony. Even in Aeschylus, who is more actively possessed with moral notions, the central or heart-thought of each drama comes out rather as a last result than as the primary motive.

[1] But for the facts of chronology, the line in the *Seven*, 1044, "Be warned; a people rescued knows not ruth," might have seemed to reflect the experience of the restored democracy.

CHAPTER VII

CONVERSATIONAL AND LYRIC ELEMENTS: I. THE DIALOGUE; II. THE CHORUS[1]

IN Chapters IV. and VI. we have considered the *substance* of Greek tragedy—the fable and the thoughts. We now return to the consideration of the *form*; and before dealing with this synthetically, *i.e.* before looking at the structure of a drama, considered as a whole, we have to study the parts of which it is composed, in the arrangement and distribution of which the art of the dramatist largely consists.

I. THE DIALOGUE.

The student of a Greek play is at once encountered with the diversity of two main elements—the choric passages and the dialogue. It has been already shown that the choral part

[1] Books to consult: Müller's *History of Greek Literature*; Schiller's Preface to the *Bride of Messina*; Schlegel's *Lectures on the Drama*; Munk's *Greek Tragedy*, ed. Verrall.

was originally supreme, and we shall have occasion presently to observe that in the typical period of Greek tragedy the Chorus had a recognised place amongst the persons of the drama. But it is convenient for us to treat first of the dialogue as the more obvious and familiar part, and we are justified in doing so by the saying of Aristotle, that Aeschylus had already given to the dialogue the principal rôle (*τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστὴν κατεσκεύασεν*). The natural order in this case differs from the historical.

By dialogue, for the purpose of this chapter, I understand that part of the business of a Greek play which either takes place wholly between the actors, or is carried on between the leader of the Chorus, or the choreutae severally, and persons on the stage. We may therefore consider separately, under the present heading (1) narrative, (2) dramatic speeches, (3) antiphonal interchange, (4) stage lyrics.

It may be premised that the language of tragic dialogue is for the most part intermediate between poetry and prose; it was noticed by the Greeks themselves that the rhythm of the senarius was not far removed from the natural movement of ordinary Athenian speech. The dialect is Attic, with a strong tinge of archaism, borrowed either from the earlier speech of Attica, or from epic poetry, or from contemporary Ionic. In

this, as in other respects, Euripides comes nearer than the others to real life. He is more modern, more purely "Attic."

1. The germ of the tragic dialogue was originally contained in the recitations of the Coryphaeus, or leader of the Chorus, who recited to his companions (probably in trochaic verse) the account of an event or a situation, on which the whole Chorus presently declaimed their sentiments. This species of dramatic business survives in the part of the Messenger. The transition may be observed in the *Persae* and the *Seven against Thebes*, in which the rôle of the Messenger is so important. A messenger's speech may occur at any crisis of a play, but the normal place for it is in introducing the catastrophe, or at the point corresponding to the beginning of the fourth act of a Shakespearian tragedy (*Macbeth*, iii. 6; *King Lear*, iv. 3). The *Antigone* and the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles (in the part of second Messenger) afford the most distinct examples of this arrangement. In the *Ajax*, on the other hand, where the *dénoûment* happens on the stage (and therefore needs not to be reported), the chief use of narrative occurs in the earlier (and expository) portion of the play, as in the long story of Tecmessa and the speech of the Messenger reporting the prophecy of Calchas. And in the *Agamemnon* this element of interest is

supplied at the pause before the climax of the action, in the speech of the Herald describing the tempest, while in the *Persae* the Messenger's narrative is the culminating point.

Much of the skill of the dramatist consists in placing these descriptive pieces, in which the Athenians were remarkably tolerant of length. The Messenger describing Salamis has an unbroken speech of nearly eighty lines. The Herald's "tempest" speech is the longest in the *Agamemnon*, with the single exception of Clytemnestra's lengthy rhodomontade of hypocritical welcome. In the *Prometheus* and elsewhere prophecy virtually fills the place of narrative.

Such passages in Aeschylus often remind one of an Homeric rhapsody. In most cases the fable of a tragedy had previously been the theme of some episode in an epic poem. And the tragic poet borrows from his predecessor a kindred elevation of style. This is especially the case in narrative speeches, in which an epic flavour is often distinctly perceptible. But even here the dramatic motive gives increased concentration. Aeschylus, the most epic of the tragic poets, has a peculiar grandiloquence in narrative. This appears most prominently in the *Persae*, where, as Sainte-Beuve remarked, the epic poem of Salamis is given once for all.[1] Such

[1] *Portraits Littéraires.*

passages cannot be truly said to interrupt the action, which flows on continuously in a lordly stream, or even if stationary is being gradually realised, even by means of narrative; but in passing these meadow-lands it may be said to overflow its banks, and to exceed the strict limits of dramatic purpose. The narrated action, even when episodical, acquires an interest of its own and breaks forth into an independent exuberance of descriptive metaphor.

It is otherwise in Sophocles, in whom every touch even on the background is carefully adapted to emphasise the main effect. The narrative of the messenger in the *Antigone* is a drama within the drama, fore-shortened but clearly seen and indispensable in its relation to the immediate action. In the *Electra* and *Philoctetes* the fictitious narratives which are necessary to the plot are elaborately contrived to bring out the emotions which they are calculated to produce on the chief persons.

This constitutes an essential difference between such passages and the epic rhapsodies, which at first sight they resemble. They are marked as integral portions of the action, not only by the gestures of the Chorus, but, as formerly observed, by the by-play of persons on the stage. The presence of Eurydice, for example, during the Messenger's speech in the

Antigone forms an essential part of the composition. This is still more evidently true of those narrative speeches which are more deeply embedded in the action itself,—such as the great speech of Oedipus to Jocasta (*Oed. Tyr.*, 771-833), or that of Hyllus to Deianira in the *Trachiniae*, 749-812, where something that is past or done elsewhere is brought immediately to bear upon the series of emotions which the spectator witnesses, and which excite his sympathies.

In Euripides the narrative element again overflows, and occasionally claims an interest superior to that which is felt in the immediate scene. The spectator who listens to the account of the death of Polyxena may almost forget the sorrows of Hecuba in the interest awakened by the pictorial narration, which however is now rather marked by oratorical skill, and by the grace of the idyllic poet, than by a majesty analogous to that of epic verse. A similar observation holds of the description of the madness of Heracles, and of the account of the death of Pentheus in the *Bacchae*. Graphic description in these supplies the place of dramatic action, and we feel that in relation to such passages the spectator of tragedy (*θεατὴς*) is passing into a listener (*ἀκροατής*).

2. Dramatic speeches. The long narrative passages which have been so far characterised

may be contrasted with those more concentrated utterances through which tragic feeling is directly conveyed. The passion expressed of course greatly varies in intensity according to the point which has been reached in the development of the action, and the length also varies from a dozen lines or so to forty or fifty; but it is always impossible fully to appreciate the force and beauty of such passages when separated from their context. Yet even when taken separately the strength and majesty of Clytemnestra's avowal of her crime, the profound and complex passion of Oedipus with his sightless orbs, the outburst of Philoctetes which so works on the conscience of Neoptolemus, the death-speech of Ajax, or the despairing rage of the cruelly-used Medea, and the gentler pathos of dying Alcestis, cannot fail to impress one who reads or hears them. How much more when any of these is given worthily on the stage at the climax of a great action! The student may find it instructive to compare such passages also with those most nearly resembling them in Homer, who in a sense, as Plato says, may be regarded as the Father of tragedy. The appeal of Tecmessa to Ajax, for example, may be viewed as parallel to that of Andromache to Hector, or Oedipus' angry outbreak on Teiresias may be compared with Agamemnon's against Calchas, or

the speeches of Ajax or Eteocles with the most passionate utterances of Achilles. The difference will be found to consist not merely in the greater length of the epic passages, or in the larger rhythm, but also in the greater discursiveness of language, which is natural and indeed necessary where the action is not brought immediately before the eye.

(3 and 4) The longer speeches are sometimes preceded sometimes followed by an altercation, generally, but not always, in single lines, or even parts of lines (*ἀντιλαβαί*); and they are sometimes introduced or followed by a series of lyric rhythms, of which more presently.

3. For an outburst following an altercation see *Oedipus Tyrannus* (380 foll.): *ὦ πλοῦτε καὶ τυραννί*, etc. "O wealth and sovereign power," etc. For long speeches followed by single lines, see the scene between Haemon and Creon in the *Antigone* (631-765). The regularity of this mode is alien from the spirit of the English drama, although something closely resembling it appears occasionally in Shakespeare's earlier manner (*Richard III.* iv. 4; *Richard II.* ii. 1), and it is imitated by Milton in *Comus*, 275-288. It certainly could not be extended to an equal length without monotony on the modern stage. But in the Dionysiac theatre, some amount of uniformity and even formality was not without its use, and

the repetition of stroke for stroke in this dramatic interplay only served to emphasise the situation. It was partly by this means that the poet brought out those contrasts of opposing views about the same matter of fact—δύο λόγω περὶ ἅπαντος πράγματος ἀντικειμένω—in which every Athenian audience took such delight. A kindred effect is sometimes produced by speeches of greater length which are antiphonal or antistrophic in their effect. Tragedy reflects an instructive light upon the growth of rhetoric and of rhetorical casuistry in Athens. The curious forensic arguments in the *Eumenides* give perhaps the only very distinct illustration of this in Aeschylus. But they serve to illustrate the kind of reasoning that might be expected to influence the old-fashioned court of Areopagus. When we come to Sophocles, the examples multiply. The dialogue between Creon and Haemon in the *Antigone*, between Teucer and Menelaus and Agamemnon in the *Ajax*, between Oedipus, in both the plays which bear his name, and Creon, between Electra and Clytemnestra, between Neoptolemus and Odysseus in the *Philoctetes*, while they have in every case a strong dramatic element, are also distinctly rhetorical. They show the power of putting an adversary in the wrong, of defending one's own cause, etc., which was so highly prized at Athens. In Euripides, rhetoric is still more rife; it is

less dominated by tragic feeling, and it is already degenerating into sophistry. Polynices arguing with his mother, or Odysseus with Hecuba, says not what is naturally prompted by his character and situation, but what a clever speaker, well primed with commonplaces, might think well to say on the question which the situation has raised. Again the Athenian spectator is becoming a listener (*οὐ δράματος θεατὴς ἀλλὰ σοφιστῶν ἀκροατής*).

The rhetorical element includes, or rather absorbs into itself, the gnomic (or proverbial) element which preceded it in the development of Greek literature. Many maxims of Theognis, of Solon, and other authors of similar apophthegms are embedded in Greek tragic poetry. Such reminiscences are frequent in Aeschylus no less than in Euripides, but in the earlier poet they are more intimately inwrought into the substance of his thought. Contrast in this respect the *Prometheus* with the *Orestes*. The wise maxims of Oceanus remind us of the simple moralising of such speakers as the daughter of Periander in Herodotus (iii. 53).

4. The *commos*, or lament, formed a stated portion of Greek tragedy when we first become acquainted with it. Fine examples of the commos at this stage occur at the end of the *Persae*, and of the *Seven against Thebes*, and

again at the end of the *Antigone*. But the place of the commos, which sometimes occurs more than once within the limits of a single play, is extremely various (see Chap. VIII.), and there are brief commatic passages occurring in the midst of scenes, which merely indicate the climax of emotion, and were no doubt accompanied with incidental music. The commos is technically described as a lyrical interchange between the Chorus and the chief person on the stage. But either on one side or the other the ordinary metre of dialogue is sometimes employed.

Stage lyrics, monodies.—In passages of exceptional emotion the chief person on the stage breaks into lyric verse, either in the middle of a speech (*Prometheus*, Soph. *Electra*) or in a prolonged strain accompanied with music (Soph. *Electra*, *Philoctetes*); a practice in which Euripides greatly delighted, and for which he is ridiculed by Aristophanes.

Anapaests and trochaics.—Such passages as those just spoken of are to be distinguished from those in which the anapaestic measure is put to its ordinary use for expressing movement, as in accompanying an entrance or an exit (*Prometheus*, *Antigone*), as well as from the long trochaics (perhaps the original metre of dialogue), which are introduced to give the effect of haste (*Persae*, *Oedipus Coloneus*).

The Chorus as an interlocutor.—When the Chorus is spoken of as taking part in the dialogue, the leader of the Chorus (Coryphaeus) is generally to be understood. Sometimes, however, as many as three or five members of the Chorus interpose by turns; and in a few passages all the members speak successively (*Agamemnon*, 1344-1371).

II. The Chorus.

With the exceptions above noted, lyric measures are reserved for the Chorus. In proportion, therefore, as the part of the Chorus is more or less important, the lyric element increases or diminishes, until in the later phase represented by Euripides the business of the Chorus is again extended, not now for dramatic purposes, but for musical effect.

In the *Supplices* and *Persae* of Aeschylus, and to some extent in the *Eumenides*, the Chorus is "protagonist," *i.e.* not only are they more in evidence than any single person, but the change in their fortunes constitutes the main interest (for Xerxes cannot be the hero of a drama in which he appears only towards the end). Also in the *Supplices* and *Persae*, and these alone (unless we take account of the *Rhesus*), the Chorus *prologise*. They come on at the beginning, and are present to the end. In the *Seven against Thebes* the centre of gravity, so to speak, has been already transferred to the

chief person, whose fortunes, however, are bound up with those of Thebes, while his character is contrasted with that of the Chorus of Theban women, who may thus be said to play the part of δευτεραγωνιστής, the second rôle. From this point onwards, the Chorus, though still counted amongst the *dramatis personae*, is gradually subordinated, and the pivot of interest is on the stage. Before the *parodos*, or entry of the Chorus, the audience have been already put in possession of the main situation, or point of departure, and this is sometimes concealed from the members of the Chorus, which under the previous arrangement was impossible. Of this more will be said in Chapter VIII. The part taken by the Chorus in the level dialogue has been already spoken of. It remains to speak of the *parodos*, the *exodion*, the *stasimon*, and (although this has been already mentioned) of the part taken by the Chorus in the *commos*, or lament, and kindred (commatic) passages.

When the Chorus no longer, as in the earlier drama, take the principal part, they contribute to the action through the relation in which they stand to the chief person, most commonly as sympathisers, but sometimes also as antipathetic or neutral. The leader of the Chorus, indeed, seldom entirely sympathises with the tragic hero, but entering most thoroughly into his cause, and pitying his misfortune, endeavours (vainly) to moderate

the excess of his passion. Exceptions, which occur to the mind at once, are the *Choëphoroe*, the *Philoctetes*, and the *Hecuba*. In the *Choëphoroe* and the *Hecuba* the Trojan captives, from different motives but in a similar spirit, incite to the deeds of violence which form the catastrophe. In the *Philoctetes*, where the interest turns on Neoptolemus' conquest over himself, the Chorus actually contribute to his temptation by suggesting that he should carry off the bow. The attitude of the Argive women in the *Electra* of Sophocles is the more usual one, sympathising as they do with Electra's grief, but seeking to moderate its excess; admiring her desperate determination, but dissuading her from attempting the impossible; then, after the arrival of Orestes, becoming interested spectators of the action in which they cannot share, and finally exulting in the event.

In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* the loyalty of the horror-stricken Chorus to him whose fall they cannot check or soften, lends a touch of milder pathos to the catastrophe; whereas the coldness of the Theban elders to Antigone adds greatly to the poignancy of her fate. Thus in Sophocles, while the Chorus has ceased to be *protagonist*, their position is essentially dramatic—not moralising the situation merely, but contributing to the tragic effect.

The *parodos*, or entrance of the Chorus, was

managed in various ways. The rule in early times was that they marched in column-wise, "chanting together" in an impressive manner, as in the *Agamemnon*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Antigone*. But sometimes in Aeschylus and Sophocles, and more frequently in Euripides, we have what has been called the "commatic parodos," in which the Chorus enter singly or in several groups, and their relation to the chief person is forthwith defined by a broken interchange of speech and song. The *Philoctetes* of Sophocles gives a typical example, with which the choric entrances in his *Oedipus Coloneus* and *Electra*, in the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, and the *Electra*, *Medea*, *Heraclidae*, *Orestes* of Euripides, may be compared. The peculiar effect produced by an entrance of the Chorus in two divisions may be studied in the *Ion* and the *Alcestis*. The double parodos of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* is singularly bold. First the Furies are described by the Pythoness, then discovered asleep, grouped round Orestes, then one by one, roused by Clytemnestra's ghost, they awaken. Then, forming apparently in the orchestra, they sing their "prelude," and after an altercation with Apollo, in which they are represented by the Chorus-leader, they make their exit, probably in single file, on the track of Orestes, leaving the stage vacant for the change of scene. (The only other clear instance of such removal of the Chorus occurs in the *Ajax* of Sophocles, where

it makes way for the solitary death-scene—though it would certainly be convenient if in the *Helena* of Euripides the Chorus were likewise absent from line 386 to 514.[1] And if more than the extant relics of the Greek drama had been preserved to us, it might be found that the phenomenon was less singular than we now suppose it to be.)

The scene is changed to Athens, where Orestes prologises, and the Chorus enter, again apparently in single file and speaking one by one. Then, while their leader makes rejoinder to Orestes' second speech, they form in the orchestra, where they move about and sing their "binding hymn." This takes the place of an ode immediately following the parodos, and forming one whole with it, but separable and different in kind, which occurs in several tragedies, and is difficult to name. It is sung not during but after the entry of the Chorus, and in rhythmical structure resembles the stasimon; yet the name *stasimon* is reserved by Aristotle for the song of the Chorus which separates two portions of dialogue or dramatic scenes. Clear examples of what is meant are Aesch. *Persae*, 65-134, *Agam.* 104-257. The structure of the parodos in Sophocles' *Antigone* seems to be a variation upon this mode of composition. Here two strophes and two antistrophes are separated by three anapaestic systems—the whole being

[1] Cp. A. Müller, *Bühnenalterth.* § 11, p. 126.

followed by a fourth set of anapaests. The Chorus may be imagined as pausing at three several *stations* before taking up their final position in the orchestra—from each of these pouring forth their lyric strain, and then chanting the anapaests as they move on. The fourth set or system of anapaests accompanies, not any movement of the Chorus, but the entrance of Creon.

Exodion.—The Chorus is always present at the conclusion of the drama, and almost always has the last word. The only certain exceptions to this are the *Prometheus*, where the Titan's own voice is last heard, and the *Eumenides*, in which the Herald speaks last, and the concluding strain is sung by the Propompoi, a supplementary chorus, or παρασκήνιον, of which other instances occur in the *Supplices* of Aeschylus and the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles.[1] Euripides seems to have adopted certain stereotyped forms of exodion for the Chorus to go off with. Peculiar to Aeschylus, on the other hand, is the semichoric ending, in which the Chorus sings alternately in two divisions.[2]

Stasima.—The word *stasimon* properly signifies a *stationary* song. But it is not to be supposed

[1] The last lines of the *Trachiniae* of Sophocles are sometimes given to Hyllus, who is marshalling the funeral procession. But I understand them to be a challenge from the chorus of Trachinian maidens to the maidens within the house of Ceÿx, who would enter to them as a "parascenion" and add their ranks to the concluding spectacle. On the word see Müller's *Bühnenalterth.* § 14, p. 176.

[2] This belongs to the quasi-epic nature of the incomplete drama.

to exclude all movement, and was probably accompanied with expressive gesture. Whether the strophe and antistrophe were or were not commonly assigned to different moieties of the choric troupe is a doubtful point. The complexity of certain Aeschylean movements especially would be rendered more effective by some such division. The number of stasima varies with the nature of the action. Taking Aristotle's definition, there are only three in the *Agamemnon*, while it is possible to reckon as many as five in the *Antigone*. Here, however, it is only right to distinguish the sudden appeals to Love (781-800) and Bacchus (1115 foll.) from the sober stateliness of the odes on Man (332 foll.) and Fate (582 foll.), and the cold elevation of the legendary song (944 foll.) The cry to Bacchus may be classed with other songs occurring at crises of the action (*hyporchemata*), in which choric movement had evidently an unusual share—*Ajax*, 693 foll., *Trach.* 205-225, and perhaps *Oed. Tyr.* 1086-1109. There is only one sustained choral ode in the *Philoctetes* (676-720). The commatic parodos is followed by a single strophe and antistrophe (169 foll.), and what might else have been a first stasimon is divided between lines 391-402 and 507-518.

The choral odes sum up in a concentrated ideal form the feelings naturally awakened by the action at each stage of its progress—not by any means

invariably the feeling of the poet himself, nor that which he would impress on his audience as the final outcome of the play.[1] In Sophocles at least the Chorus never depart from their supposed character; nor in Aeschylus do they really do so, although in one place by a curiously bold stroke the Erinyes address their words directly to the Athenian spectators, as in the parabasis of a comedy. Compare Eur. *Andr.* 623, 951, where γνῶμαι are addressed to the world at large, *i.e.* to the spectators.[2] But, as a rule, the Chorus give utterance to the feelings, not, as has been said, of the ideal spectator,[3] but of the average spectator glorified. The ideal spectator's feeling is that which is produced by the drama taken as a whole. It is the final result of the alternate action and reaction; of the complex interplay of purpose, thought, emotion, the rise, culmination, and close of the tragic interest. It is vain to look for this, the soul of tragedy, in a single part or member of the framework—least of all in the brief strain of commonplace reflection with which the Chorus leave the orchestra. The value of the Chorus as an intermediary between the spectators and the action is evident. And the fact that it

[1] See above, Chap. VI.

[2] The other places in which this has been supposed to occur are doubtful, the suggestion resting merely on the use of masculine forms by a feminine chorus.

[3] Schiller, Preface to *Bride of Messina.*

was retained throughout the classical period shows how well it accorded with the open-air publicity of Greek life. But the attempts of *a priori* criticism to define the function of the Chorus from an ideal point of view have not succeeded well. The remark of M. Paul Stapfer, generally a sensible critic, that Aeschylus and Sophocles both fell short of such an ideal,[1] goes far to reduce the theory to absurdity.

The lyrical portion of a Greek drama, whether sung by the Chorus or by a person on the stage, was in Doric Greek,[2] and was in this, as in other ways, contradistinguished from the dialogue, which was couched in the peculiar modification of Attic or Ionic speech which has been above described. But as the Ionic dialect was modified, so was the Doric. Epic as well as lyric traditions largely influenced it. And in the anapaestic passages, which were given in a kind of recitative, the dialectical peculiarities were less marked than in the lyrics properly so called. The conventional inconsistency involved in all this was so little felt, that in many of the commatic interchanges, where the iambic verse of dialogue is interspersed amongst lyric numbers,

[1] *Shakespeare et les Tragiques Grecs*, p. 128.

[2] Cp. Monier-Williams, Introd. to *Sakuntalá*. "In every Sanskrit play the women and inferior characters speak . . . Prákrit —bearing the same relation to Sanskrit that Italian bears to Latin. . . . The hero . . . and all the higher male characters speak in Sanskrit; and . . . half of what they say is in verse."

the Attic and Ionic forms are used in the iambic lines.

When private individual interests began to play a part in tragedy, the continual presence of the Chorus began to be felt as an encumbrance. There are several places in Euripides where either the Chorus are disregarded or their exit and re-entrance have not been marked. Sophocles removed the Chorus, as we have seen, in order to acquaint us with the inmost thoughts of Ajax before his death, and nothing but the exaltation of feeling which makes both the king and queen regardless of bystanders could render probable the great scene of mutual confidence between Oedipus and Jocasta.

The difficulty is only partially removed by providing for some relation of peculiar intimacy between the chief person and the Chorus, whose function then resembles that of the confidant on the French stage. The scene between Phaedra and the Nurse, for example, in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, would be more effective if the other women were away. The advantages, however, more than counterbalanced this disadvantage, and the imagination of the Greek spectator was strong enough to discount what was inconvenient but inevitable in the business of the scene.

The only serious attempts in modern tragedy to reinstate the Chorus in their ancient function

have been those of Schiller in his *Bride of Messina*, and of Racine in his sacred plays (*Athalie* and *Esther*). Racine is thought by French critics (who should know) to have succeeded admirably.

CHAPTER VIII

DRAMATIC CONSTRUCTION—TRILOGIES—DRAMAS OF RECONCILIATION—SATYRIC PLAYS[1]

ARISTOTLE has made the somewhat obvious remark that a tragic action must have a beginning, middle, and end. A truth which is scarcely less obvious, but sometimes ignored, is that the tragic poet aims not merely at a series of vivid effects, but at a grand totality of impression. This is true in the main even of Euripides, though he is too often led aside by the interest of some incidental situation or by his own genius for graphic description, or by the desire to create surprise through an unexpected diversion or strange catastrophe. Still, the action of every Greek drama may be traced through five stages, corresponding to the five acts of a modern play: (1) the start, (2) the rise, (3) the height, (4) the change, (5) the close. One of the dramatist's

[1] Books to consult: Aristotle's *Poetics*; *Sophocles* in Green's "Classical Writers" (Macmillan and Co.); Art. "Drama" in *Ency. Brit.*; Moulton's *Ancient Drama*; Jonson's *Discoveries*.

chief difficulties is to sustain the interest through the fourth act, while reserving "a trot for the avenue," as Sir Walter Scott puts it. Euripides takes occasion by means of a second turn, or *peripeteia*, to "pile up the agony" still higher.

Not much of subtilty is apparent in the progress of an Aeschylean play. All is "straight hitting from the shoulder," to borrow an art-critic's phrase. The characters are introduced; they speak their sentiments frankly and without reserve, unless there is a motive for dissimulation patent to the spectators (as in Clytemnestra's reception of Agamemnon, or Orestes' speech to Clytemnestra in the *Choëphoroe*), in which case they dissemble strongly and unhesitatingly. All have much the same largeness of utterance and grandiloquence of tone. Yet with what a sweep and impetus, when the poet so wills it, does the action move, carrying along with it in one broad current the emotions of the chief persons, of the Chorus, and of the auditory! Take, for example, the *Persae*, one of the simplest in construction of all dramas. At the opening all the persons are in suspense, and the anxiety is intensified by the recital of Atossa's dream. The Elders have partly succeeded in calming her fears and suppressing their own, when the Messenger arrives, and suddenly, without preface, announces the

whole extent of the calamity.[1] At this point we are not one fourth part through the play, and the reader naturally asks himself, how is tragic interest after this to be maintained? It is maintained most simply, yet most effectively, by what Sainte-Beuve has called the Epic of Salamis, which is not merely a drama within the drama (having a climax and consummation of its own), but the most vital part of the drama itself, because every successive onset of disaster, as it is freshly told, falls with an immediate crushing effect on the queen-mother and on the Persians who are there. When the narrative ends, the *peripeteia*, or turn of fortune, has already taken place. In modern phraseology, the curtain has fallen upon the third act. After so tremendous an impression, how is interest to be further maintained (as we should say) through the fourth act? We shall see. The poet is not yet at the end of his resources. Transgression and retribution are not yet full. Narrative has run its course, but there is still room for prophecy. For though Salamis is over, Plataea is to come. In order to quench the last struggling rays of hope and give completeness to calamity, Aeschylus resorts to the expedient of raising the spirit of Darius and

[1] Sophocles would have followed Herodotus, according to whom the tidings of the taking of Athens had reached Susa before the report of the defeat at Salamis.—Her. viii. 54.

bringing the dead monarch upon the scene. The introduction of this incident at the particular juncture where it occurs, and in relation to existing beliefs about the state of the dead, must have been a stupendous *coup de théâtre.* Darius reads the lesson of the situation and predicts the extermination of the army left in Hellas, then sinks again beneath the ground. Atossa, with a mother's weakness, goes to fetch the best apparel for Xerxes, whose actual return, in rags and humiliation, and his melancholy responses to the sad reproaches of the Elders, add a touch of milder pathos to the *exodos* (or fifth act) of the play.

Plain and straightforward as the action is, of which a sketch in outline is here given, the reader will have observed that it is notwithstanding rich in organic structure, climax, gradation. The anapaestic parodos (which is also the prologos) is immediately followed by an ode, recalling in magnificent strains the going forth of the great army, for whose return all in Asia are longing. This is followed by the entrance of Atossa, which forms part of the first epeisodion, but really contributes to the exposition or groundwork of the drama, the exaltation of interest attending on Atossa's dream being expressed in a trochaic dialogue. The scene, when so far heightened, is broken in upon by the coming of the Messenger, whose brief announcements are met with short lyrical outbursts

on the part of the Chorus (giving a commatic effect). Then the interview between Atossa and the Messenger is continued for two hundred and twenty-five lines, and followed by a remark of the Chorus-leader and speech of Atossa to him, with which the long scene terminates. The interest has now culminated. The first stasimon which follows this (and which comes like that in the *Oedipus Coloneus* at the centre of the play) expresses the feeling of the Elders at the ruin of the host. Atossa's second entrance is contrasted with the first. Then she was mounted upon a car, and gorgeously arrayed; now she comes unadorned upon foot, with offerings for the dead. Her speech of twenty-four lines is hardly enough to count for an *epeisodion*, and therefore the choric strain which follows it, and is really part of the scene, should not be regarded as a stasimon (dividing scene from scene), but should rather be classed with those appeals to divine powers, accompanied with special gestures, which do not interrupt the action but are continuous with it. (See especially Soph. *Electra*, 1384-1397; *Oed. Col.* 1556-1578. *Supra*, Chap. VII. *hyporchema*). The excitement caused by the appearance of Darius is marked by a recurrence to the long trochaic measure. His disappearance and the exit of Atossa are followed by the second stasimon, and this by the (anapaestic) entrance of

Xerxes and the commos, with which the play concludes.

The *Persae* may be divided into five parts (or acts), as follows :—

(1) 1-159. Reminiscence and anxiety of the Elders.
(2) 160-248. Atossa's dream.
(3) 249-597. Epic of Salamis.
(4) 598-908. Apparition of Darius.
(5) 909-1077. Xerxes' home-return.

The *Persae* and its companion-plays were produced in 472, four years before the first victory of Sophocles. Let us next examine the structure of the *Antigone*, which was brought out nearly a generation after this, when the younger poet had attained the acme of his renown.

The *Antigone* is by no means the most elaborate of the extant plays of Sophocles, of which it is probably the earliest. But it is eminently characteristic both of his individual manner and of the middle or culminating period of Greek tragedy. In contrasting it with the *Persae*, therefore, we include some features which are present also in the later plays of Aeschylus. In the *Persae*, the Chorus prologise ; the *Antigone* opens with a dramatic dialogue in which the protagonist takes part. And it is at once observable, not only that the prologos is separable from the rest of the play, but that from the first two actors

are together upon the stage, and the part of Antigone is thus contrasted with that of Ismenè. The parodos is almost Aeschylean in its breadth of effect. We note, however, that while the Persian Elders were apprehensive of disaster from the first, the triumphant exultation of the Thebans is but slightly dashed with a sense of the horror of the fratricidal combat, a topic which they brush aside as inauspicious amidst the general joy. This illustrates the artistic reserve, or so-called irony, with which Sophocles prepares for his dramatic contrasts. Another instance of the artifice presents itself in the first speech of Creon, and in his whole bearing until the revelation of Teiresias breaks him down. It is not merely unconsciousness of wrong which the poet marks in him, but the passionate self-assertion of conscious rectitude. It is on a man of this temper that wave after wave of the action bursts, until over-confidence gives way suddenly to superstitious fear, not for himself only, but for the State. The first complication is introduced in the early manner, which was never quite abandoned, by the aid of narrative. And the narrator, in his character of Watchman, retains a strong tinge of the rusticity (*vestigia ruris*) which is said to have belonged to the earlier drama. But observe how skilfully this very characteristic is employed (1) to enhance by contrast the heroism of Antigone,

(2) to irritate Creon, and (3) to relieve the tension of the situation, just as in approaching the climax it becomes more sombre.

The mysterious deed (no mystery to the spectator) leads the Chorus to reflect with the naïveté of the average mind—echoing also the commonplaces of Creon—that man is hard to rule, that the righteous who obey the laws shall be exalted, and that the way of transgressors is hard. Of the bearing of these remarks on the action the poet says nothing. Then with the return of the Watchman, bringing in Antigone, the interest rises to the height at which it is sustained throughout the central portion of the play. The Watchman is dismissed, but not until the beauty of Antigone's action has made itself felt, peering from beneath the homely garb of the man's common speech, which at one point (as his occupation has made him familiar with the life of nature) blooms unconsciously into poetry. The two strong wills, Antigone's and Creon's, are now immediately confronted. She makes her appeal to the eternal law. He reasserts his authority as head of the State. Here the value of the second actor becomes strikingly apparent. And in what follows the third actor also is brought in, through the entrance of Ismenè, and a further shade of contrast, between the heroic and the average human being, helps to accentuate and define the situation.

The Chorus see in all this nothing but a lamentable infatuation and the terrible fatality still impending over the house of Laïus.

The situation is now fully developed, but the crisis of the action is not yet reached. Antigone is arrested and condemned, but not sentenced; Creon is obdurate, but still tolerably self-possessed. One touch, indeed, has nearly driven him wild. It is where Antigone exclaims against the opprobrium which, in reviling her, he throws on his own son Haemon. This bitterness is now to be exacerbated. For Haemon comes and pleads with his father, at first temperately and with the tact of true affection. But when his well-meant intercession works against his own desire, and only enrages the despot, he speaks hot words in anger and goes desperately forth. The Chorus see in this only the excess of youthful love. Meanwhile Creon's wrath has passed all bounds, and he determines to immure Antigone, having spared to stone her, not out of any tenderness to her, but professing (perhaps really thinking) so to avoid pollution for the State. At this point the action culminates, and the last entrance of Antigone follows almost immediately, the little choral ode on the power of love just serving to secure a pause and link together rather than divide the scenes of which the "third act" is composed. She speaks as one beneath the shadow of death, not shaken in resolution, but

dwelling less than formerly on defiance of the world, from which she sadly turns away, and feeling bitterly the isolation of her lot—sure only of one thing, that her love for her own kindred is unquenchable. She herself wonders at its depth. The Chorus again moralise and quote examples from mythology. Antigone is crushed, and the will of Creon is apparently triumphant, but really he is on the brink of ruin. This truth is revealed by Teiresias, the blind prophet, who threatens the despot with the consequences of divine anger, not to himself alone, but to the State, in the fancied maintenance of whose cause he has transgressed. At last the proud stubborn spirit suddenly gives way, not through any "compunctious visitings of nature," but under the influence of religious terror. He resolves, at the eleventh hour, to undo his deed. The Chorus, ever responsive to a change of mood in one of the chief persons, give way to a sudden flickering of hope amidst despair, and in their song to Bacchus the essential gloom of the situation is strangely relieved and lightened with a false joy.

In the speech of the Messenger who reports Haemon's death, with its attendant circumstances, and the manner of Antigone's end, the several threads of the action are drawn together. First comes the burial of Polynices, or of what remains of him (for his sister had been no longer there to

guard the dead). Then it is found that Creon, in thus seeking first to pacify the powers beneath—an act which in his former mood he had characterised as "labour in vain" (πόνος περισσός)—has sealed the fate, not only of the maiden, but of his son, whose lamentable voice he hears as he approaches the vault. Next comes what Aristotle thought too dreadful—what is in any case the crowning horror of the catastrophe,—the son's attempt upon the father's life, followed by his own suicide. All this is told while the mother, Eurydice, is standing by. She goes forth silently, then Creon enters mourning over Haemon, then another messenger reports to him Eurydice's suicide, and her curses upon him, as the author of all her sorrows. He has outraged natural affection, and he is punished with the death of wife and child, preceded by their final alienation from him.

Truly Sophocles was, as M. Sarcey once observed, *le plus malin des dramaturges*—the most cunning of dramatic artificers. It is sometimes said that in the best French acting the play is never forgotten in the act, the act in the scene, nor the scene in any phrase or syllable. Something akin to this is true of Sophocles as a composer. Each of his plays is a living organism in which every minutest part contributes something indispensable to the soundness, beauty, force, and harmonious activity of the whole. Let the

reader observe how the action we have just described is developed, or rather unfolds itself *from within*.[1] Given the character and the situation, all seems to come inevitably. The persons are their fates. The gods have hidden themselves, even as the poet hides his art. The only "celestial machinery" is afforded by the soothsayer, a familiar personage of Greek life, who reveals, but does not cause, the sequel. The rôle of Haemon, with which that of Hyllus in the *Trachiniae* should be compared, is also very "cunningly" employed. The betrothal, though so little dwelt upon, effectively emphasises the heroism of Antigone's act. It also serves to betray the one vulnerable place in the hard yet brittle determination of Creon. Taking his son's warning for a threat, he imagines him as going forth to make insurrection in the city. This precipitates his action, and hastens the doom of Antigone. And when his proud will gives way to religious terror, and he has first gone to bury Polynices, one more surprise awaits him in hearing his son's outcry as he approaches the "unhallowed cell." Rendered blind to the claims of natural affection through the reaction of public responsibility on his proud nature, he could not foresee the course which first love so frustrated

[1] "It is an acknowledged rule of the Indian drama that the business should spring from the story, as a plant from the seed."—Wilson's *Hindu Theatre*, Introd. p. xxiv.

would take, and yet he has within him a heart that can be wounded, though too late, by the loss and by the bitter alienation from him of his wife and son.

If we turn now to the *Hercules Furens*, which Browning has translated for the English reader, and which deserves perhaps as much as any other play of Euripides Balaustion's encomium of "the perfect piece," the first thing that strikes us is the novelty of the fable. According to the usual version, which through Ovid and Seneca has found its way into modern literature (Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, iv. 10), the madness of Heracles was caused by the poisoned robe sent by Deianira on his return from Oechalia, and was fatal, not to his children, but to Lichas. This was immediately followed by the funeral pyre on Mount Oeta and the hero's assumption to the skies. But here in Euripides the fit of mania follows on his return from Hades, which has been delayed on Theseus' account, just when he was about to rescue his children and his wife Megara from the tyrant Lycus. Instead of rescuing, he destroys them all. On his recovery he is taken to Athens by Theseus, and he must be supposed to survive the incident many years.

The next thing to notice is the external manner in which so violent a change of fortune is brought on through an incident superinduced and not evolved from within. After the third stasimon,

Iris, the messenger of Hera, appears from heaven, leading with her a terrible figure, whom she introduces as Lyssa, *i.e.* Delirium. The Thebans are told not to be alarmed, however, since the visitation is not aimed at them, but only at their hero. While they stand afflicted and awe-stricken at the sudden reversal of their hopes, a messenger comes in and relates the terrible scene, in one of the most vivid of those narrative-speeches in which Euripides excels. Amphitryon, the earthly father of Heracles, then enters, followed by the hero, whose awakening from his delirium in such a presence is the more pathetic. On learning what he has done, he is about to kill himself, when by a fresh surprise, for which the spectators are scarcely more prepared than for the former change, the play is brought, if not to a happy, yet to a soothing and consolatory close. Theseus unexpectedly appears. He had been mentioned once before in the play, where Heracles said he had delayed his own return in order to bring Theseus back to earth. Theseus comes in order to succour Heracles against Lycus. But the cruel work of Lycus has been done by an unlooked-for hand, and the friend only arrives in time to save the hero from himself.

Moral.—"How much better it is to have a human friend than to suffer from the caprices of a heavenly father!"

The action, which is "tragic" enough, is thus softened at the end; and human kindness is contrasted, as the poet's manner is, with divine malignity—"if indeed there be gods at all." The originality of this treatment of the legend is apparent, and the difference both of spirit and artistic method between Euripides and his predecessors is sufficiently clear. There must have been a change in the temper of the Athenian audience. Traditional mythology was losing hold on the more intelligent minds. The tales were less familiar and less credible than formerly. The poet was therefore bound to be more and more explicit in setting forth the peculiar version of his fable, which, for dramatic purposes, he intended to be accepted for the time. And hence must have arisen also the substitution of a rhetorical *prologue*, addressed to no one in particular, for the dramatic initial scene (or *prologos*) with which Sophocles carried his audience *in medias res*, or the no less effective lyrical parodoi of Aeschylus. But in essential outline the structure of the *Hercules Furens* does not depart from our general scheme.

Act I. The Start—1-139.

a. Amphitryon prologises.

b. Scene between Amphitryon and Megara—Heracles delays his coming.

c. Parodos.

Act II. The Rise—action complicated—140-450.

a. Entrance of Lycus. Scene between Lycus, Amphitryon, leader of Chorus, Megara.

b. First stasimon.

Act III. The Height—451-814. Expectation is further roused and sustained by the return of Heracles from Hades.

a. Return of Heracles, who resolves to be avenged on Lycus.

b. Second stasimon.

c. Entrance of Lycus.

d. Third stasimon.

Act IV. The Change—815-1086.

a. Apparition of Iris and Lyssa.

b. Outburst of Chorus.

c. Narrative of Messenger.

d. Monody of Chorus—entrance of Amphitryon—commatic interchange.

Act V. The Close—1087-1428.

a. Entrance of Heracles.

b. Entrance of Theseus.

c. They go off together, leaving the Chorus forlorn.

Observe that by a double turn, or *peripeteia*, the climax is carried into the fourth act, as it were, so that the excitement goes on augmenting until it suddenly drops at the close. This sensational mode is characteristic of Euripides. It remains to say a few words about the handling of the Chorus in this play.

The second and third stasima occur near

together towards the middle of the drama. The long passage 822-1428 is divided into three by the excited lyrical outbursts of the Chorus at 875 and 1017. These, indeed, form part of the action; but in the three stasima, 348-458, 638-700, 763-814, the Chorus, although taking their starting-point from the actual situation, digress into generalities and mythological excursions which must have in some measure distracted the attention of the spectators from the business in hand. And this was probably what both the poet and his auditory desired. They had no longer the profound concentration of Periclean citizens.

Trilogies.

The fact appears indisputable that throughout the great period of tragedy each poet who competed at the Dionysiac festival produced four plays for judgment, one of the four being a "satyric drama." Aeschylus, however, seems to have stood alone in binding his three tragedies into a connected whole, to which the satyric play also bore some reference. It is by no means certain that even he did so always; and it has been suggested that where the action of the four plays was not continuous there was some connection of idea. If this were so, it remains unproved, and is of no importance for our present inquiry.

It has also been suggested that in the later period, while four plays were presented by each poet, only one of them was acted. But this is a conjectural view. And we may be contented to accept as practically true the saying of Suidas, that Sophocles discontinued the tetralogy and brought single dramas into competition with single dramas.

The ingenuity of Welcker found a way of connecting in groups of three or four all the plays of Aeschylus whose names are preserved. It is enough to mention here that each of his seven extant tragedies may be shown to have had a place in such a series. Reserving for separate consideration the Orestean trilogy, we may speak first of what tradition enables us to gather about the remaining four.

I. In the Alexandrian argument of the *Persae* there is a statement, which probably has the authority of Aristotle or of some authentic list of tragic victories, that "in the archonship of Menon (472 B.C.) Aeschylus won the tragic victory with the *Phineus*, the *Persae*, the *Glaucus Potnieus*, and the *Prometheus*." It thus appears that the *Persae* was the central play of a trilogy. The connection of the subjects is not obvious. The only remaining fragment of the *Phineus* tells of the Harpies carrying off the hero's food. The action was therefore laid in mythical times, but may have contained prophecies of Artemisium and Marathon.

A fragment of the *Glaucus Potnieus* (fr. 36, Nauck)—

> Chariot on chariot, man on man in death,
> And steed on steed in dire confusion lay—

is at least consistent with an account of the battle of Plataea, of which Glaucus, the hero of Potniae in Boeotia (between Thebes and Delphi), might speak as an eyewitness.

The *Prometheus* here mentioned was a satyric drama in which the Bringer of Fire was confronted with the leader of the Chorus, who in his delight at seeing the unknown element nearly burnt off his beard. It is quite uncertain in what way this fable was connected with the preceding.

II. The *Seven against Thebes* was the concluding drama of a trilogy on the Tale of Thebes, with which the *Sphinx* was appropriately connected as a satyric drama. The three tragedies were *Laius*, *Oedipus*, *Seven against Thebes*. No fragment of the *Laius* gives a hint of its main import, but an indication is supplied by the reminiscence contained in the second stasimon of the *Seven* (745-757)—a son is born to Laïus in defiance of the oracle. The subject of the *Oedipus* must have been much the same as that which Sophocles handled in his great masterpiece. The sole remaining fragment has reference to the "triple way." But the later poet, who saw the wisdom

of softening horror with pathos at the close, has omitted (in his first *Oedipus*) the curse upon Eteocles and Polynices which must have found place in the Aeschylean tragedy, in preparation for the action of the *Seven*. The whole trilogy formed one stupendous tale of evil destiny pursuing a race for the primal sin. The horror is relieved in the extant play by the patriotism of Eteocles, the virtues of Amphiaraüs, the sisterly devotion of Antigone. But there is no solution of the mystery, no final reconcilement, as in the Promethean and Orestean trilogies.

III. In the Promethean trilogy the knot that was tied was loosed again. The *Prometheus Bound* was followed by a *Prometheus Unbound*. But it remains uncertain whether *our Prometheus* was the central or the opening play. *Primâ facie*, the former supposition, that it held the second place, has great inherent probability. According to this view, *Prometheus the Fire-bringer* represented the offence to Zeus and boon to men, *Prometheus Bound* the punishment of the offence, *Prometheus Unbound* the reconciliation of the contending powers. But Wecklein and others have taken occasion, from some words in a scholion, to suggest that the *Fire-bringer* was the concluding play, and celebrated the institution of the worship of Prometheus on earth after his acceptance by the powers above. Once more, in

the list of plays appended to the Medicean MS., the order is *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Bringer of the Fire*, *Prometheus Unbound*. What most concerns us is the relation of *Prometheus Unbound* to *Prometheus Bound*. This subject has a superficial and an inward, that is to say, a mythological and a theosophic, aspect. Mythologically speaking, the *Prometheus Bound* introduces us to the ancestress of Heracles by whom he is to be finally released. At the opening of the *Prometheus Unbound* Prometheus has been brought back to upper air, and the eagle is tormenting him. The Titans come to sympathise with him. Heracles also comes, and Prometheus prophesies of his labours. Then Heracles transfixes the eagle with an arrow from his bow, and Prometheus at last tells the secret, viz. that if Zeus marries Thetis their offspring will be stronger than his sire. Whereupon Thetis is married to Peleus. For the deeper or symbolical meaning of the Promethean trilogy see Chapters XI. and XIII.

IV. It is not certain that the *Supplices* was one of a trilogy, but it was probably connected in some way with the *Danaïdes*. Whether this play followed immediately on the former, or whether there was a drama between, which culminated in the fiftyfold betrothal, cannot be proved. But there is at least some plausibility in the latter view, which Mr. Morshead has

developed in the preface to his translation of the *Supplices*.

—Of one other trilogy we can speak with confidence, although none of the plays belonging to it remain entire. It is that in which Aeschylus treated directly of the Dionysiac legend, and in particular of the fate of the Thracian Lycurgus. (See Homer, *Il.* vi. 130 ff.) This seems to have been represented in the *Edonians*, the first of the three, in which it appears that the introduction of Bacchic rites into the palace of Lycurgus, king of the Edonians, played an important part (Longinus, *de Sublim.* xv. 6). The second play, the *Bassarides* (or *Bacchanals*), represented the still more terrible fate of Orpheus. The third drama, the *Young Men*,[1] probably illustrated the introduction of Bacchic orgies amongst the male population. But how a tragic turn was given to this theme we do not know. In the satyric drama the story of Lycurgus was again introduced in a grotesque aspect.—

V. *The Orestean Trilogy.*

The Aeschylean treatment of the story of Orestes, like that of the Promethean legend, according to the more usual supposition, comprehended a complete cycle of action, reaction, and restoration or reconcilement.

[1] Νεανίσκοι.

1. *Agamemnon.*—In revenge for the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Clytemnestra deserts her husband Agamemnon and puts him to death.

2. *Choëphoroe.*—Orestes, on coming to manhood, returns home, and, with the support of his sister Electra and his friend Pylades, compasses the death of Aegisthus, the usurper, and of Clytemnestra. To this act of matricide he has been instigated by Apollo.

3. *Eumenides.*—Orestes is pursued by his mother's Furies, and takes refuge finally at Athens, where at the first solemn meeting of the Council of the Areopagus he is defended by Apollo, and acquitted, by the casting vote of Athena, from the guilt of blood.

If the Oresteia were regarded as one continuous play (and many of Shakespeare's dramas are longer than this would be), the arrival of Agamemnon would mark the beginning of Act ii., which (as in *Macbeth*) would end with murder and usurpation. The action of the *Choëphoroe* would fill Act iii., culminating as it does with the death of Clytemnestra, and terminating with a preparation for the "change" in the exit of Orestes followed by the Furies. The contention of Orestes with the Erinyes would occupy Act iv., concluding with his acquittal, which forms the turning-point of the *Eumenides.* Act v. would commence with Athena's persuasive appeal to the ancient goddesses.

The *Eumenides* and the *Prometheus Unbound*, each taken singly, were instances of what Dryden has called the weaker form of tragedy—the drama of reconciliation—of which the *Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* are the Shakespearian examples. In Sophocles the *Oedipus Coloneus* and *Philoctetes* (the two latest amongst the extant plays) belong to the same category. In these, while there is still an orderly development of the action from within, there is a dash also of external incident in the manner of Euripides. The desired consummation is delayed by hindrances occurring unexpectedly, the arrival of Creon and Polynices, the restoration of the bow ; and is likewise brought about by the aid of outward occurrences (the storm in the *Coloneus*, the adverse wind and the appearance of Heracles in the *Philoctetes*). But on the other hand the *Philoctetes* is the one amongst all Greek dramas which comes nearest to the inwardness and psychological analysis of the modern romantic drama.

The taste for this milder form of tragedy (a taste which uniformly dominated the Indian stage) must have increased towards the end of the fifth century. For a large proportion amongst the extant plays of Euripides have a happy ending. Hence partly, perhaps, Mrs. Browning's eulogy on—

> Euripides the human,
> With his droppings of warm tears,

And his lifting of things common
Till they almost touch the spheres.

Nothing so strongly marks the conservatism of the Attic stage as the persistence of the satyric drama, which survived as a sort of apology to Dionysus for the licence which had removed tragedy so far from the original type. There is clear evidence that two satyric plays were produced as late as 415 B.C., the year following the disaster at Syracuse. These were the *Athamas* of Xenocles and the *Sisyphus* of Euripides.[1]

The only remaining specimen of the satyr-play —the *Cyclops* of Euripides—is known to English readers in Shelley's very felicitous, though incomplete, translation. The Athenians were doubtless amazed when Silenus rivalled Odysseus in "wise saws and modern instances." And the play has enough of frank coarseness (in parts which Shelley has avoided); but it has neither the spontaneous *verve* and *brusquerie* which one imagines to have belonged to this kind when in the hands of Pratinas, nor the mock-heroic dignity which Aeschylus conferred upon it.[2] And this

[1] Ael. *Var. Hist.* ii. 8 (quoted in Haigh's *Attic Theatre*, p. 320): "Xenocles was first (whoever Xenocles may have been) with *Oedipus*, *Lycaon*, *Bacchae*, and *Athamas* for the satyric play; Euripides second to him with *Alexander*, *Palamedes*, *Troades*, and *Sisyphus*—the last satyric." It may have been dangerous to leave any ceremony out so soon after the mutilation of the Hermae.

[2] See Hor. *Ars Poet.* 229.

toning-down of the traditional form may help to make intelligible the anomalous fact, of which there seems to be undoubted evidence, that the *Alcestis* was produced in the year 438 B.C., *i.e.* comparatively early in the career of Euripides, as the fourth play of a tetralogy, that is to say, as a substitute for the satyric play.

The remarks of Professor Jebb upon this subject in his article on Euripides in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* ought to be specially consulted.[1]

[1] *Ency. Brit.* vol. viii. pp. 674, 675: "The *Alcestis* is altogether removed . . . the purely Hellenic drama to the romantic."

CHAPTER IX

CHARACTERISATION [1]

ALL dramatic interest turns on the treatment of situation and character, and it is impossible that these two elements should in reality be separated. But it has been argued that, while in the ancient drama the action is primary and the persons only subordinate, in Shakespearian tragedy this order is reversed. Recent criticism, however, has vindicated for Shakespeare the essential unity of action and of idea without which no drama can be great. What here concerns us is to show cause for the assertion made in a previous chapter, that while the persons of the ancient stage are less complex than those of Shakespeare, they are not less real.

But first it may be well to hear the other side, and to ascertain how far the view which we are questioning has been pushed by *a priori* criticism.

Winckelmann compares the beauty of Greek art to the purity of water drawn at the source,

[1] Books to consult: Paul Stapfer, *Sh. et les Trag. Grecs*; Patin, *Les Tragiques Grecs*; *Sophocles* in Green's "Classical Writers."

which is without flavour. This comparison is upheld by Schelling, and is somewhat hesitatingly applied by M. Paul Stapfer to the protagonists of Greek tragedy, each of whom appears to him the embodiment of a moral idea, so that their conflict has in it nothing personal, but is equivalent to the clashing of incompatible abstract principles, or, in the language of the Greeks, of opposed divinities. Through the annihilation of the human agents the divine contradiction is harmonised. This theory, which seems to be somewhat rashly generalised from an ultra-Hegelian study of the *Antigone*, cannot be accepted without considerable qualification. Most true, the divine agency is omnipresent, even when not visibly brought upon the scene; and if this truth were carried out to a logical result, the human persons would dwindle into insignificance. But neither the poet nor his audience reasoned thus. To their apprehension all the persons were characteristically distinct; all the more so because each of them is "solid" and of one piece. And so they are also to the modern reader who lives long enough with them to make their acquaintance, and has not been previously too much dazzled by the miraculous fulness and variety of Shakespeare.[1] Nor can M. Stapfer's

[1] Heracles' treatment of Deianira is not the result of any magic, such as that which excuses Dushyanta's forgetfulness of Sakuntalá, but of an impulsive nature absorbed in a new passion.

further assertion be admitted, that in this respect Euripides is in advance of Sophocles.[1]

The Clytemnestra of Aeschylus is not merely, as she herself asserts in defending herself against the elders, the incarnation of some vengeful household fiend, or, as she pleads afterwards with her threatening son, a passive instrument in the hands of Fate. She is a woman of heroic mould, denaturalised with solitary brooding over the wrongs of outraged maternity, but still a woman. When her hour arrives, she uses all the concentrated energy which belongs to a powerful nature possessed with a dominant idea. Yet she retains so much of genuine womanhood as sincerely to love the man who protects her and abets her crime. When she sees him dead her self-possession deserts her, and she forgets her own imminent danger in her grief for him. True, she has no "compunctious visitings," no hypnotic reaction, like Lady Macbeth, no subconscious undercurrent of remorse. She is the same in the other world as in this, and hounds on the Furies although herself a powerless shade.—There, if you will, is

[1] See Mommsen's *Hist. of Rome*, ii. 444. "In Aeschylus . . . each of the contending powers is only conceived broadly and generally . . . Sophocles seizes human nature in its broader types, the king, the old man, the sister; but not . . . the features of individual character." Also A. Ward in *Ency. Brit.* art. "Drama," p. 406 b: "If his (Euripides') men and women are less heroic and statuesque (than those of Aeschylus and Sophocles) they are more like men and women."

"the solidity of the antique." But the "psychology" of Aeschylus is less at fault than some modern critics have imagined. Has he not, in the concluding scene of the *Agamemnon*, depicted for us in this man-slaying woman some of the natural shrinking of feminine human nature from unnecessary bloodshed, the satiety of a heart that by violence has gained an end long sought, a mind not incapable of horror, and a will whose very strength of determination shows itself in minimising the extent of guilt? She does not rage illimitably, like some French or Russian tigress who has tasted blood. No other character in Aeschylus is so fully developed as his Clytemnestra and Cassandra are,—his Agamemnon, for example, is but slightly drawn,—but in all his *dramatis personae* he manifests the same undefinable and incommunicable power of "giving the world assurance" of a human being. For it hardly needs to be observed that his gods, when they come upon the scene, are also human.

Sophocles, the consummate artist, proceeds by a different method. Instead of being sketched in bold broad lines, his characters are etched, as it were, with fineness and extreme care. But neither is his outline wanting in strength and firmness. Like all else in his dramas, the persons are adapted to the central situation and the main intention, and it is only after a careful review of

the whole composition that any one of them can be rightly estimated. To superficial readers they are apt to appear colourless and *insaisissable.* Even so keen a critic as Professor Jebb appears to think that it is useless to attempt to analyse the character of Oedipus in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, —that he must always be to the spectators what the actor makes him. But the actor has not been left to create the part out of nothing. The poet has given clear indications of the nature which he represents as so tormented. The man doomed to be a parricide is a most affectionate son; he who was to be proved incestuous is one to whom all the purest domesticities are exceptionally dear. The man of penetrating mind, to whom mystery was torture, proves utterly blind to his own position, and is self-condemned to irrecoverable darkness when the hour of revelation arrives. The most patriotic and unselfish of men, he brings the plague on the place of his adoption, which proves to be his native city. But, on the other hand, there is in him something dangerous, if not to others yet to his own peace,—a spirit of rashness, making his misfortunes not incredible. Though he is the very fool of destiny, yet it may be truly said that his own impulsiveness is his ruin. He is goaded to Delphi by a dim rumour and a drunken word. From Delphi he is sent flying by an oracle half-understood; and in his

sore and melancholy mood he picks the fatal quarrel by the way. He flings himself into the Sphinx-adventure, and a time of brittle happiness follows. When the plague comes, and the oracle is brought from Apollo, he takes the whole burden on him with a light heart. But the two altercations, first with Teiresias and then with Creon, reveal the existence of hidden fires within him, and he is proved to be one who, "being wrought," can be "perplexed in the extreme."

By and by, the death of Polybus, his reputed father, at Corinth, awakens old hopes and impulses that had but slumbered, and he again shows a strange lightness of spirit until the scales suddenly fall from his eyes.

Once more in his act of self-blinding, and the passionate scene which ensues, he evinces the same impetuosity to which all his actions had been due.

These traits of character are combined by the poet's art in a personality that is single and indiscerptible. Though by no means colourless or featureless, the characterisation still retains the "plastic solidity" which has been attributed to the Greek drama generally. It is not quite true to say that the soul of the hero is not the sphere of tragic action; but there is no inward conflict. The man is not divided against himself.

It has become well-nigh a commonplace of

late years to claim for Euripides the singular merit of inaugurating a new phase of tragic art and anticipating the modern stage by the inwardness of his creations. "Le centre de l'intérêt tragique fut désormais dans l'âme humaine"[1] ("thenceforward tragic interest has centred in the human soul"). This claim is only partly justified. The central motive of the *Medea*, the *Hippolytus*, or the *Hecuba*, is certainly more personal in one sense, *i.e.* more purely egoistic, than that of the *Seven against Thebes* or the *Antigone*. But the personality that is absorbed in state or family affairs is not for that reason less individual, nor is the objective treatment of human life necessarily unspiritual. On the other hand, it is quite true that the psychological interest awakened by the conflict of opposing motives in the same person is a distinct anticipation of the modern romantic drama, and this is a development of tragic business which only came into vogue together with the popularity of Euripides. Whether it was an innovation due to his invention or a natural movement in the evolution of the art which he shared with others in effectuating, is a question which the scanty fragments of Greek tragic poetry do not enable us to determine. What is certain is that in the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, produced in the last

[1] Paul Stapfer, *Shakespeare et les Tragiques Grecs*.

decade of the fifth century B.C., the characterisation is of this "modern" kind, and that it is more perfect than anything in Euripides. For, after all, is not the complexity of the latter poet often a complexity rather of situation than of character? Does not the author seem to have considered, not "What effect would this change of circumstances have on this individual?" but "How would ordinary human nature comport itself under such and such conditions?" Do not the persons sometimes reason too explicitly (not to say too calmly) of their own distraction? Does not even the grand reflection of Medea—

> I am well aware
> How fraught with evil are my deeds to come,
> But Passion, still the cause of crimes to men,
> O'errules all else within me—

partake more of the nature of "sign-post criticism" than of the language of a soul in agony? And is not the remark of Aristotle perfectly just, that the Iphigenia of Euripides is a different person towards the end from what she is at the beginning of the *Iphigenia in Aulis*? But in the *Philoctetes* the twofold struggle between opposite motives in the breasts of the hero and Neoptolemus is presented at once with dramatic truth and psychological subtilty. The pivot of the situation is less now the change in outward fortune by

which the bow and its master are secured to serve the Greeks at Troy, than the complex inward problem which keeps the emotion of the audience at full stretch,—on the one hand, "Will the fixed idea in the mind of the wronged Philoctetes ever give way?" and on the other, "Will this guileless youth, the son of the truth-lover, persevere under the influence of ambition in a course of treachery and deceit, or will sympathy and friendship be too strong for him?" The change of mind in Neoptolemus is in fact the climax of a play within the play; and the drama, like some in Euripides, has a double turn, the apparition of Heracles arresting what had seemed the consummation of the action.

Of course it is not to be denied that in Greek tragedy certain typical personages have a tendency to recur. Such are the prophet, the tyrant, the messenger, and, in Euripides, the self-immolating youth or maiden. But in all of these, notwithstanding "family resemblances," there are traits of character which have a differentiating and individualising effect. The Messenger in the *Persae*, the Scout in the *Septem*, and the Herald of the *Agamemnon*, the Watchman and the final Messenger in the *Antigone*, have each and all of them ethical "ear-marks" by which they are clearly distinguishable. So have Agamemnon and Menelaus in the *Ajax*, and Creon in the

Oedipus Coloneus as compared with both. The Teiresias of the *Oedipus Rex* is more terrible, and also more human, than the Teiresias of the *Antigone*. It may be somewhat difficult to find distinctive differences between Macaria, Polyxena, and Menoeceus, in Euripides, but characterisation is not his strong point. In Sophocles the finer shades, as for example between Ismene and Chrysothemis, are more easily perceived than defined, and are only seen completely through the relation of either to the principal characters. This will appear more fully in discussing the merits of the three great tragic writers severally.

CHAPTER X

LIVES OF THE TRAGIC POETS[1]

Of most of the Greek tragic poets we know hardly anything but the name, and even of the three great masters whose works are in part preserved to us the biographical record is scanty and not trustworthy. The number of authentic names is limited by the fact that during the most important period not more than three tragic choruses were given in a single year. In this chapter we can do little more than recapitulate the salient points of the familiar tradition.

Thespis flourished in the sixth century B.C. (534?), and is said to have carried about his show and his unwritten compositions from village to village. The plays that went by his name in late antiquity, fragments of which have been preserved by Plutarch and others, were manifestly forged by some imitator of Euripides.

[1] Books to consult: *Ency. Brit.*; Smith's *Dictionary of Classical Biography*; Jebb's *Primer of Greek Literature*; Green's "Classical Writers"; Müller's *Lit. of Greece*, cc. 21-26; etc.

Choerilus is said to have produced 150 plays, and if this number is correct, the practice of bringing out four dramas every year must have very early prevailed. The fable of the only play of his whose title has been preserved, the *Alope*, belonged to the Eleusinian cycle of mythology. In his time, therefore, it may be assumed that the cult of Demeter had already become associated with that of Dionysus.

Phrynichus the tragic poet (to be distinguished from the general and the comic poet of the same name) established a lasting reputation by the charm of his lyric numbers and the elaboration of the choral business generally. Tradition marks him as a great original poet. It was from him, according to Aristophanes, that Aeschylus received the art which he developed.[1] His boldness of invention showed itself in his two great historical dramas (or cantatas), the *Taking of Miletus*[2] and the *Phoenissae*, in which the subject of the *Persae* was anticipated. In the more direct line of tragic work he brought out many fables of which his successors afterwards availed themselves. Thus his *Aegyptians* and *Danaïdes* dealt with the fortunes of the families of Aegyptus and Danaüs, one of Aeschylus' early themes; the story of Meleager was touched in his *Pleuronians* (cp. Aesch. *Atalanta*, and *Choëph.* 604); the "tale of Pelops' line" was

[1] *Ran.* 910.

[2] See above, Chap. III.

carried back to Tantalus; and it is interesting to observe that in his *Alcestis* (a subject apparently not handled by Aeschylus or Sophocles) the apparition of Death bearing a sword, and probably also the wrestling of Heracles with Death, features which are thought grotesque in Euripides, were anticipated. On the other hand, the fable of Antaeus, the great wrestler, perhaps because especially suited for spectacular and choral treatment, appears to have been peculiar to the pre-Aeschylean stage.

The hospitality of Athens in naturalising foreign artists is specially marked in the case of Pratinas, who was a native of Phlius (above Sicyon), and therefore a Dorian by birth. He shares with Choerilus the credit of differentiating tragedy from the satyric drama. Perhaps, when Phrynichus with his tragic strains had thrown the older and more rustic art (in which tragic and satyric elements were blended) into the shade, the originality of Pratinas may have shown itself in developing satyric drama as a separate *genre*. His son Aristias was also distinguished in both kinds, producing an *Atalanta*, and preceding Euripides with a satyric play on Polyphemus, in which the Cyclops complained that Odysseus had "drowned the miller"—

> Y' have spoiled the wine with watering it.

This passed into a proverbial saying.

All these from Choerilus downwards were competitors with Aeschylus, who outshone them, but has not altogether eclipsed their fame.

Aeschylus (born 525 B.C.; died 456 B.C.)

Euphorion, the father of Aeschylus, lived at Eleusis, and was happy in his three sons. Cynegeirus, apparently the oldest, had his hand hacked off at Marathon in grappling with a Persian galley. Aeschylus also fought well at Marathon, and both Aeschylus and Ameinias are said to have distinguished themselves at Salamis. Aeschylus would then be forty-five, a seasoned soldier,[1] but on that occasion Athens needed all her men. That the early education of Aeschylus was in some way associated with the Eleusinian worship we gather from a line of Aristophanes, in which the father of tragedy is made to say—

(Aesch.) Demeter, on whose lore my spirit was nursed,
Grant I prove worthy of thy mysteries!
Ran. 886.

That through this or some other channel he imbibed a strain of Orphic or Pythagorean, possibly also of Heraclitean, learning may be inferred from the general drift of his poetry. But

[1] "In eld
Still nourishing strong nerves with vigorous blood."
Seven against Thebes, sub init.

that which evoked his genius most powerfully was the crisis in the national career of which the victories of Marathon and Salamis—"quarum pars magna fuit"—were the splendid fruits. Those high successes were felt by him to be the embodiment of yet higher principles, whose observance was the salt of Athenian life, the secret of Athenian glory; principles of equity, of loyalty, and of mercy. The Oresteia was his crowning effort for enforcing these, and, according to a not incredible legend, some reverse or disappointment in connection with this production was the cause of his leaving Athens a year or two before his death. The zeal for the Court of Areopagus which he expressed in the *Eumenides*, ran counter to the prevailing policy of the time. That Court had been stripped of its secular functions four years previously by the action of Themistocles (?) and Ephialtes, and its powers were to be still further curtailed by Pericles and Archestratus. The lately published Aristotelian treatise on the Athenian Constitution has enabled us to see how natural it was that the Marathonian warrior should hold exalted views of the prestige due to an institution which had won a new lease of influence and importance through its wise promptitude in distributing a largess to the fleet before the battle of Salamis. The poet certainly spent some time at the court of Hiero in Sicily, and was buried in

that foreign land. The Geloans showed his tomb with this inscription—

> This monument in Gela's fertile plain
> Doth Aeschylus, Euphorion's son, contain.
> Of Athens he; whose might the Mede will own,
> That met him on the field of Marathon.

SOPHOCLES (born 496 B.C.; died 405 B.C.)

Sophocles was sixteen at the time of the battle of Salamis, and is said to have led the chorus of youths in the procession that celebrated the victory—his preceptor in music and dancing having been Lamprocles. During his long life he seems never to have left Athens except on public duty. This he did several times, however, as an ambassador to subject states, and on one occasion as a general. He was thus identified, though in a less striking manner than his great predecessor, with the civic life of his countrymen, and had opportunities of becoming widely familiar with Hellenic life. His appointment as one of the generals in the Samian war (440 B.C.) is said to have been due to the favour won for him by the *Antigone*. He himself, however, acknowledged that his colleague Pericles was right in refusing to him the credit of good generalship. Gentle and inoffensive, and somewhat too open perhaps to social delights, he made an impression on

his contemporaries which must have contrasted strangely with the austerity of his art. Aristophanes imagines him in the other world,

> Kindly-attempered there as here above,

to be good-naturedly willing to yield precedence to Aeschylus, though prepared, if need were, to contest the tragic throne with Euripides.

The sayings attributed to him, (1) that his own style had had three phases, one turgid, in imitation of Aeschylus, one dry and severe, and one more humane, which was the best of all, and (2) "Euripides represents men as they are, I make them what they ought to be," whether authentic or not, are at least well invented. The insinuation of Aristophanes that the poet was grown covetous in his old age need not have any real foundation; and the story that his sons tried to prove him incapable, and that he defended himself by reading part of the *Oedipus at Colonos* —although Cicero tells it—is almost certainly a myth. It is quite inconsistent with an early epigram, which seems authentic, and also with another tale, more pleasing and less improbable, that Sophocles, in producing a drama after the death of Euripides, caused his actors and his chorus to appear in mourning.

Minor tragic poets who were contemporary

with Sophocles, and may be accounted anterior to Euripides, are Aristarchus of Tegea, Neophron of Sicyon, Ion of Chios, Achaeus of Eretria (all foreigners like Pratinas), Euphorion (the son of Aeschylus), Astydamas, his grandson, and Philocles.

Aristarchus wrote an *Achilles*, which Ennius is said to have imitated, and a *Tantalus*. A fragment to the following effect is attributed to him by Stobaeus :—

> He who hath never felt the power of Love
> Knows not Necessity; beneath whose sway
> I came perforce this journey to my doom.
> Love makes the weakling mighty, and to men
> Lost in distraction points a hidden road.

Neophron's chief distinction is to have written a *Medea* upon lines which were closely followed by Euripides. Those who take an interest in the subject of "literary borrowing" may compare the fragment quoted in Chap. XV., with Eur. *Med.* 1021-1080. It should be said, however, that the authenticity of the lines has been repeatedly questioned, though hardly on sufficient grounds.

Ion of Chios, an author of repute in other ways, was the most considerable of the minor tragic poets, and was on terms of intimacy with Sophocles. *Agamemnon*, *Argivi*, *Teucer*, *Phoenix*, are the titles of some of his plays. No less than three belonging to the legend of Heracles are referred to by ancient

writers, and in these he seems to have drawn from the same sources which are used by Sophocles in the *Trachiniae*. Their titles were *Alcmena*, *Eurytidae*, and *Omphale*—the last a satyric drama. Ion's language was exquisitely refined.

Achaeus was a poet of some mark, but having the misfortune to contend with such great rivals, only once carried off the tragic prize. His satyric plays, however, were much admired. Some of his tragic subjects were Adrastus, Alphesiboea, Theseus, Cycnus, Oedipus, Philoctetes, Phrixus.

There seem to have been two poets bearing the name Astydamas, an elder and a younger, but little is known of their productions.

The only drama of Philocles whose title is known was on the peculiarly Attic fable of Tereus. But it is recorded that he won the prize against the *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

EURIPIDES (born 480 B.C.; died 406 B.C.)

The third great tragic poet was, like his greater predecessors, in a manner associated with Salamis, where he is said to have been born about the time of the battle, his parents having migrated thither with the other Athenians; who, if they themselves remained on board the fleet, placed their wives and children in the island for security. His name, meaning "son of the Euripus," is said to have been

given to him in commemoration of the victory at Artemisium—the Greek fleet before that battle having been stationed at Chalcis in Euboea. The few traces of his life-history which have been preserved to us are suggestive, as Professor Jebb has well observed, of restlessness from within and from without. He does not seem to have held public offices as Sophocles did, but to have contented himself with the exercise of his profession as a tragic poet. That he associated more or less with Anaxagoras and with Socrates is probable enough, and he certainly partook largely of the intellectual influences of his time. Rumours of his unhappiness in married life are just substantial enough to warrant a hesitating belief, although the comic poets were capable of inventing everything. Like Aeschylus, he withdrew from Athens in his later years, and accepted protection from the "tyrant" Archelaus in Macedonia. It is fabled that like Actaeon he was torn in pieces by hounds; but no allusion to so strange a death occurs amongst the many gibes with which Aristophanes has aspersed his memory. The *Bacchae*, produced at Athens after his death, is said to have been written in Macedonia.

The great period of tragedy is concluded with the death of Sophocles; and it is needless for our purpose to enumerate the lesser lights which for a

time continued to shine on the Attic stage, of whose works Aristophanes speaks contemptuously as swallow-like twitterings heard for a little while once for all in spring. But this chapter would close too abruptly without any mention of Agathon, the beloved of Socrates, whose first tragic victory is celebrated in the *Symposium* of Plato, and whose *Flower*, already more than once referred to, was a late experiment of the declining art; or of Chaeremon, a poet of the "fleshly school," of whose sensuous descriptions some fragments of striking beauty are preserved; or of Carcinus and Theodectes, whom Aristotle employs to illustrate what is to be avoided. Yet Xenocles, the son of Carcinus, gained the tragic prize against Euripides.[1] Tragedy after this became a rhetorical exercise, and the only true arena for dramatic genius was the middle and newer comedy.

[1] Müller, *Lit. of Greece*, p. 383 of Eng. Trans.

CHAPTER XI

AESCHYLUS—THE SEVEN EXTANT PLAYS[1]

WITH the exception of the Oresteia, which is fairly complete, each of the remaining plays of Aeschylus is, in all probability, a fragment from a greater whole. In judging of the *Prometheus* or the *Seven*, not to speak now of the two earlier dramas, it is important to reflect that we are in the same position with regard to them as we might have been with regard to the *Choëphoroe* or the *Eumenides* if one of these had alone been left to indicate the grandeur of the entire trilogy.

But in every Greek work of art, the spirit of the whole is traceable in every part. The considerate student may gradually come to apprehend the full bearings of what time has spared ; and, as the Latin proverb has it, to know the figure of Hercules by the foot,—*ex pede Herculem.*

[1] Books to consult: Miss Swanwick's *Aeschylus*; *Aeschylus* in "Blackwood's Classics"; Morshead's *House of Atreus*, and *Supplices*; *Aeschylus in English Verse* (Kegan Paul & Co.), and other translations.

It was in Aeschylus, as we have seen, that the art of tragedy grew up by rapid stages, from the choral drama, or *cantata*, to true dramatic completeness, and it is therefore specially useful in studying him to take note of the chronological order of composition. And it so happens that we have a trustworthy record of the dates at which five out of the seven plays were produced. The *Persae* was brought out in 472 B.C., the *Seven against Thebes* in 467 B.C., the *Agamemnon*, *Choëphoroe*, and *Eumenides*, in 458 B.C. For the dates of the *Supplices* and the *Prometheus Bound* there is no external evidence. But there are strong internal grounds for placing both of them. The subject of the former play, the daughters of Danaüs, belonged to a cycle of legend which had been treated by Aeschylus' predecessor, Phrynichus; the Chorus is protagonist; the choral numbers are full and perfect, while the dialogue is meagre; there is very little employment in it for a second actor. It is obvious from what has been previously said, that for all these reasons the play is rightly assigned to the earlier period, and that, on the whole, it may with probability be assumed to have preceded even the *Persae*. The exact place of the *Prometheus* is by no means equally clear. But there are strong grounds for thinking that it is not an early play. This is sufficiently proved by the *prologos* (or initial dialogue) preceding

the entrance of the Chorus, by the comparative subordination of the choral element generally, and by the scheme of versification, both lyric and iambic. Mention of Sicily points to a time not far removed from the poet's sojourn at the court of Hiero. (Was it written there?) The third actor would at least be convenient in the opening scene. But it is uncertain whether the Promethean trilogy came before or after the Oresteia, which in any case registers the high-water mark of Aeschylus' achievement as a *dramatic* poet. The uncertainty is increased by the fact that the Orestean and Promethean trilogies are different in kind. The *Prometheus*, then, is to be referred to the decade 466-456, and within these limits a later date is somewhat more probable than an earlier one. Thus we obtain the scheme—

	B.C.
Supplices	*circ.* 484
Persae	472
Seven against Thebes	467
Agam., Choëph., Eum.	458
Prometheus	*circ.* 460-456

The *Seven* holds a central or intermediate position between the choral play and the fully-developed drama.

The first thing which strikes the reader of any one of these works is the presence of the "Great Manner," as it has been called, the boldness of

the conception, the freedom of the handling, the largeness of the composition. All is imagined on a colossal scale, and there is a corresponding absence of minute elaboration. The poet is at ease in his Olympian realm. He attains to grandeur without effort, and cares not to assume a forced solemnity. A certain naïveté occasionally reminds us that it is still fresh morning with the tragic art, and that the audience are as yet unsophisticated. But all such impressions are overpowered by astonishment at the deep harmonies that are struck from time to time on the Aeschylean lyre, as now and again the reader pauses to reflect—

> That strain I heard was of a higher mood.

I. *Dramatic energy.* The power of intense impersonation and vivid presentation of an action, so clearly manifested in the trilogy, is already at work, though less explicitly developed, in the earlier plays.

(1) The son of Palaechthon may be rather shadowy, but the daughters of Danaüs are not a chorus merely. They are creatures of flesh and blood, with whose quivering excitement and tender apprehensions the spectator cannot but keenly sympathise. And, simple as the action is, there is an "increasing purpose" in it, passing through the two chief crises of the vote of the Argives and

the arrival of the ship, until it culminates in the entrance of the Herald.

(2) The construction of the *Persae* (analysed in Chap. IX.) shows a still more evenly-developed rise and fall, while the person of Atossa has a strength and fulness of individuality with which nothing in the preceding drama is to be compared.

(3) In the Eteocles of the *Seven* the poet has reached a power and massiveness of characterisation which he has hardly surpassed, unless in the person of Clytemnestra. The patriot son of Oedipus, moving through darkness to his doom, yet withal upholding his native country in her hour of extreme peril, is one of the most pathetically heroic figures, whether in fiction or in history. And the other persons, though only sketched in, and that through description for the most part, Tydeus, Capaneus, Parthenopaeus, Amphiaraus, Antigone, have a grand force and passionateness the expression of which is essentially dramatic.

(4) In approaching that stupendous creation, the Orestean trilogy, our first thought is one of amazement at the progress which Aeschylus as a dramatic poet has made in nine years. The rivalry of Sophocles has not been in vain. Ten years ago the younger man won his first victory, and we cannot but suppose that the elder and more impassioned genius has been roused to

emulation. Here is no lack of subtle contrivance, and yet no loss, but rather a fresh accession, of native power. Consider the depth and fulness of the composition. Look at the balance, so to speak, of light and shade,—the overhanging gloom which clings around the opening, a horror of darkness which neither the beacon-flame, nor the false exultation of the Queen, nor the Herald's joy in home-return, nor the arrival of the victorious King can lift or dissipate; a darkness which deepens with every utterance of Cassandra, until it closes in upon all present with the death-shriek of the King. See how this is counterbalanced by the radiant ending of the *Eumenides*: the persuasive eloquence of Athena, the blessing from the weird mouths that came to curse, the shouting of the folk after the auspicious ceremony. Then how full of dramatic and tragic vividness is all that comes between—the contrast of the royal murderess with her royally-descended rival and victim, as subtle and more powerful than anything in Sophocles; the skill with which Cassandra's prophecies, so impressive in themselves, are not only made to thicken the atmosphere of horror, but to prepare the hearts of the audience to take the most thrilling possible impression from the cry within.

And when the trilogy is regarded as a whole, this great event, the death of Agamemnon, is only the first complication—standing forth

as it does from the lurid background, of which such admirable use is made,—the Thyestean banquet, the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the sin against Menelaus, the sacking of Troy. The whole action culminates in the great scene where the son is confronted with his mother, whom he is about to kill. And that in her supreme hour the guilty woman may not be without all commiseration has been well provided by the motive assigned for her act. The spectators have not yet forgotten the picture of Iphigenia's death called up by the Argive elders in their first ode, nor the haughty pleadings of the avowed murderess, by which even they had been impressed. And if the cry of Clytemnestra over the dead Aegisthus renders more imaginable the rage of Orestes at the moment, as his father's son, it also helps the spectator to realise the pity of the entire scene. That single line has a complete convincingness, carrying home the truth that after all it is not a bloodless demon but a woman who is standing there.

The dramatic power of Aeschylus here reaches its chief height, but is by no means exhausted, as witness those astonishing efforts in the region of the supernatural, the *Eumenides* and *Prometheus*. Of these, however, there will be more to say when we are contemplating this mighty genius from the religious side.

II. Aeschylus' power of *characterisation* is gigantic, but unequally put forth. Thus, although Orestes is the cardinal figure in the trilogy, the idea which we receive of his personality is far less vivid and less fully realised than our conception of Clytemnestra. The poet was fascinated by his own creation of the man-slaying woman, much as Shakespeare was drawn on by the horror of Shylock and his bond to make the Merchant of Venice (the title-rôle) less important than the contrasted figure of the Jew. In comparison with the guilty Queen, Agamemnon (like Shakespeare's Caesar) is little more than a lay figure. But Aeschylus has elsewhere shown a great power of bringing a grand personality before the mind's eye with a few broad touches. What can be finer in this way than the contrast of Power and Hephaestus at the opening of the *Prometheus*—the harsh eagerness of the servile minister; the noble yet vain reluctance of the brother-god?

III. If Aeschylus was considered merely as a *dramatic* poet, his supremacy might possibly be considered disputable. Sophocles has written nothing on the whole so great as the central scene of the *Agamemnon*, nothing quite so solemnly impressive as the *Choëphoroe*; but he has more absolute and unerring mastery of his craft, and the results of his work as a mere playwright are more complete and perfect. But then it is not

merely as an artist that Aeschylus is to be appraised, for first of all he is in a true sense the creator of the tragic art. He is the giant from whose shoulders his successors speak. And, like a pagan St. Christopher, he has lifted them above the wild element of mythology and legend into the air and light of day.

"All the fine arts have it for their highest and more legitimate end and purpose, to affect the human passions, or smooth and alleviate for a time the more unquiet feelings of the mind—to excite wonder, or terror, or pleasure, or emotion of some kind or other. It often happens that in the very rise and origin of these arts, as in the instance of Homer, the principal object is attained in a degree not equalled by his successors. But there is a degree of execution, which in more refined times the poet or musician begins to study, which gives a value of its own to their productions of a different kind from the rude strength of their predecessors. Poetry becomes complicated in its rules; music learned in its cadences and harmonies; rhetoric subtle in its periods.

"There is more given to the labour of executing —less attained by the effect produced. Still the nobler and popular end of these arts is not forgotten; and if we have some productions too learned, too *recherchés* for public feeling, we have

every now and then music that electrifies a whole assembly, eloquence which shakes the forum, and poetry which carries men up to the third heaven."[1]

IV. Again, Aeschylus is more than a dramatic artist, because he is a prophet, and an epic and lyric as well as a dramatic poet. He rises far above mythology, and yet mythology is as it were his native element, the ready vehicle of his loftiest thought. In this as in all else he is genuinely creative; one of the fountains of the great deep, which when they are broken up overspread the world.

The *religious* element in Aeschylus is fourfold.

1. There is the popular mythology which reigns throughout, and is the embodiment of an unquestioning polytheism.

2. The conception of the superiority of Zeus, which tended to unite and organise the superhuman world, and pointed towards an esoteric monotheism.

3. The sovereignty of Fate.

4. The idea of righteousness as a sort of final cause or consummation towards which the whole creation moves.

This last is the expression of what lies deepest in the poet's mind, and is interfused with all the rest, by means of a profound and far-reaching, albeit somewhat crude and primitive, theosophy.

[1] Sir Walter Scott's *Journal*, vol. i. p. 118.

1. The polytheistic colouring varies with the varying scene. The divine *dramatis personae* are shifted with the human. The Persian elders revere the Sun and worship Darius as a god. The Theban women implore Artemis, Athena Onka, Ares, and Aphrodite. The Argos of primitive times is guarded by the twelve greater gods (*ἀγώνιοι θεοί*);—the Herald of Agamemnon, also at Argos, addresses rather the ancestors of the Pelopidae. Athena and Apollo have their due respect on the Athenian Acropolis in the *Eumenides*. And the daughters of Danaüs, although on Argive soil, are not afraid to invoke the help of the dark Egyptian Epaphus,—the bull-god Apis. Aeschylus' heroes are represented as still believing that sacrifice was literally the food of the gods (*S. a. T.* 77, *Choëph.* 255), and that libation at a grave gives temporary animation to the souls of the dead (*Persae*, 619 ff.; *Choëph.* 479 ff.)

2. Meanwhile in all the plays, including the *Persae*, Zeus figures as the supreme god. And in the *Supplices*, to begin with the earliest, very noble conceptions of the divine sovereignty appear side by side with strange puerilities of mythology. The lover of Io is the unerring governor of the universe, whose ways are past finding out. "What thing his nod hath ratified stands fast," etc. "It is he whose breath prospers each design" (*τὸ πᾶν μῆχαρ οὔριος Ζεύς*).

He is the ancient of days, ineffable, the mind of the world. There is no trace as yet here, or in the *Persae* or the *Seven* (in which Zeus, although appealed to as lord over all, is less prominent), of the idea of a succession of dynasties in Olympus. This imagination, although familiar to the readers of the Hesiodic and other theogonies, and not without support from Homer, is nowhere alluded to by Sophocles or Euripides, and amongst the plays of Aeschylus occurs only in the *Prometheus* and the Oresteia. The Argive elders in the *Agamemnon* are aware that Zeus is but the approximate human title for him "who reigns," and that—

> One erst appeared supreme, etc. (*i.e.* Uranus)
> And he is gone
> Who flourished next (*i.e.* Cronos),

and that Zeus is the author of human experience and of the wisdom that flows from it.

But the Erinyes, who naturally know more than the elders, reproach Zeus himself with the long past offence of binding his father Cronos. To which Apollo replies, in general terms, that such an offence is not irremediable. (Pindar, Pyth. IV.)

Had Zeus himself, then, learned wisdom from experience? Had he been made perfect through suffering? That seems to have been implied in the Promethean trilogy.

Here Aeschylus figures to himself a time of spiritual chaos, in which not only the elemental passions of humanity but the very elements of deity appeared to be conflicting. He is thus enabled to make it felt that it is in the union of power and wisdom, of energy and beneficence, that true Godhead, the impersonation of Righteousness, consists.[1]

In giving dramatic embodiment to this thought, he was assisted by a mythological tradition, implying that in the supreme region there had formerly been change and succession. Nay, it was whispered that Zeus himself had once been a malignant ruler. This imagination was the outcome of an age in which men's conception of the Highest was a creature of their fear. We know from the story of Mycerinus[2] and from the words attributed to Solon:[3] "God is envious and loves to make confusion," that such notions had been powerful in earlier times, and had been revived and accentuated by Ionian pessimism.[4] The legend of Prometheus, whatever may have been its origin, conveyed a special aspect of this mode of thought, expressing the superstitious dread with which a rude conservatism regards the inventor, as one who by sheer force of mind

[1] See *Aeschylus in English Verse*, pp. 294, 295.
[2] Her. ii. 129-134; *Mycerinus* in Matthew Arnold's Poems.
[3] Her. i. 32.
[4] See above, Chap. VI.

transcends the limits appointed for the human lot, and makes the divine powers of nature subservient to the wants of mortals.[1] But the legend, so conceived, belongs to a stage of culture which the Athenian imagination, immature as it still was, had far outgrown. And Aeschylus tells his spectators in effect, "This happened, indeed, but under a previous dispensation. It involved a contrariety which could not last. For Power rejecting Wisdom must come to nought, while Wisdom rebelling against Power is fettered and manacled. Omnipotence, to be eternal, must be at one with truth and goodness,—in a word, must be just. And because Power, alone and unaccompanied, is brittle and transient, beneficence and Wisdom are essentially co-eternal with Almighty Power."

Thus it appears that the conception of divine power put forth at first in the *Supplices*, however sublimely felt, was not found finally satisfying. Aeschylus came to see that it is only in combination with wisdom and beneficence that the consummation of divinity is reached, and "Power comes full in play."[2]

3. It is Prometheus himself who reveals to the awe-stricken Oceanides that even Zeus cannot

[1] Cp. Job xxxviii. 35. "Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?"

[2] R. Browning, *Asolando, Reverie.*

escape his destiny. The Fates are there conjoined with the Erinyes.

What, then, is the Aeschylean notion of Fate? The conception of an impersonal inscrutable determination, against which man strives in vain, is common to all ages and to all literatures in which there is contained any serious reflection on past experience. As we have just been reminded, the earlier phases of Greek literature present a darker mode of this conception than is to be found in Aeschylus. For as he regarded life, the gloomiest fate still yields an opportunity to the human will. The *weird* that Persian prophets had foretold, and that Darius foreknew, would not have fallen for Xerxes to *dree* it but for his own mad infatuation. The curse of Oedipus, which would never have been uttered but for the sin of Laïus, carries with it the dreadful fall of Eteocles, but cannot obliterate his noble service to his country. The evil that is unavoidable is the consequence of former sin. Thus it comes to pass that the Fates are associated with the Erinyes, the goddesses of retribution. In other words, Fate is a mysterious power which makes for righteousness, and the workings of eternal destiny are dimly conceived as the outcome of great principles whose beneficent operation becomes more and more distinctly manifest in the evolution of the human race. These principles may be

resolved into: (1) Nemesis—"Pride comes before a fall"; whatever goes beyond its measure, "the Erinyes will find it out." (2) Heredity—"the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." (3) Retribution—"who doeth shall suffer." But against each of these is set, as by natural *antinomy*, a moral notion which makes the silver lining of the cloud—(1) The spirit of moderation may partially avert ruin; (2) individual worth is not annihilated though the curse come down; (3) atonement, by the law of equity and mercy, may make an end of guilt and inaugurate a brighter day.

4. Thus by a natural transition we pass from the older to the newer dispensation, from the rule of blind Fate to the reign of righteousness. And this brings us to the very heart and core of Aeschylus' prophecy, to what in Matthew Arnold's language may be called his "secret."

From moral chaos towards moral cosmos, to order from disorder, is the direction, according to Aeschylus, of inevitable progress, the "eternal process moving on," and bringing humanity ever nearer to the goal of righteous consummation. This is imaged forth in the divine region as a change which has come over Zeus himself since he made up his quarrel with Prometheus and gave birth to Athena. And in the human realm it is more distinctly exemplified in the

taming of the Furies, whereby the wild justice of retribution, crime followed by revenge in endless alternation, gives way before the institution of Athenian equity. The negative "thou shalt not" is followed up by the positive "thou shalt." The promise as of a new gospel succeeds to the thunders of the law.

The august powers who come to curse remain to bless. As sin brought suffering, so the righteous shall inherit a blessing and be a source of blessing to posterity.

IV. Shakespeare's Wolsey speaks of the ambition of courtiers as having "more pangs and fears than *wars* or *women* have." Both these great causes pay tribute to the tragic muse of Aeschylus. This masculine genius owes much to the patriotic valour of the citizen-soldier. The *Seven against Thebes*, as Aristophanes remarked, is full of this, the "Epic of Salamis" is full of it, and the same note is continually struck elsewhere. But this impression of martial strength is rendered doubly striking by the passages of unexpected tenderness in which the weakness of ordinary womanhood is depicted. Even Clytemnestra, as we have seen, though denaturalised by the frenzy of outraged maternity, is still a woman, and, as in Lady Macbeth, beneath her resolute and boastful exterior, when exalted by passion, there is hidden some remnant of a

woman's shrinking from scenes of blood. The delicate fears of the Danaïdes, the unalterable gentleness of the Oceanides, the motherly cares of Atossa, the pious tremors of Electra in her loneliness, are all characteristic of the same manly sympathy with feminine weakness. Nor is Io's temptation or her troubled wandering to be forgotten. But the *chevaleresque* conjunction of the ideas of war and womanhood is perhaps most fully realised in the Chorus of Theban women, whose trepidation contrasts with the firmness of Eteocles in the *Seven against Thebes.*

V. The belief which Aeschylus shared with his contemporaries about the *world of the dead* retained much of the gloom of early religion and involved a strange confusion of reality and unreality. The ghost of Darius in the *Persae* is far more real than that of Polydorus in the *Hecuba*, and although Agamemnon does not appear in the *Choëphoroe*, his actual nearness to his place of sepulture is vividly imagined. Clytemnestra, too, when dead, can still hound on the Furies. On the other hand the spectre of Argus, dogging Io's steps, seems to be the creature of her frenzied imagination.

The Danaïdes have heard a rumour that another Zeus in Hades underground metes punishment to the wicked there below. And this is confirmed with clearer knowledge by the Erinyes. Yet nothing can exceed the darkness

and feebleness of the state of the dead, and Darius exhorts his ancient comrades to cheer their spirits with comforts even in affliction day by day, before they go hence and are no more seen. (See Prefatory Note to *Aeschylus*, Eng. Trans. pp. xxii.-xxiv.)

VI. It is almost an impertinence to talk separately of *style* in speaking of Aeschylus. The style is already taken into account in what has been said, because in his case, as in that of all great original geniuses, "the style is the man," and if the man is known, the style is a matter of course. But it is well to advert to two popular misapprehensions. His admirers sometimes call him rugged, and even so great a critic as Aristophanes has accused him of bombast.

1. The language of Aeschylus has not the polished smoothness of Sophocles, nor the liquid transparency of Euripides, but that which intimate acquaintance makes more and more felt is the harmoniousness which underlies the superficial inequalities. To call it rugged is like accusing the "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies" of roughness as compared with Shakespeare. What ruggedness or inequality there is, is accidental merely, and was less felt by contemporary Greeks than by the stumbling tyro, to whom perhaps the last thing clearly perceptible is the full continuous flow, as of an uncooled lava stream.

2. The language is highly figurative, and the "grand manner" is pervasive, an inferior person being sometimes made the mouthpiece of a great thought poetically expressed. This may be dramatically inconvenient, but the grandeur is native, not assumed,—the poet's voice behind the mask, not an exaggeration due to the artificial organ. If there is awkwardness in this, it is the clumsiness of Alfred allowing the cakes to burn while he thinks of driving out the Dane, or of Heracles mismanaging the distaff in some day-dream of a tussle with the Nemean lion. The fearless naturalness of some passages may be set off against the apparent turgidity of others.

CHAPTER XII

SOPHOCLES—THE SEVEN EXTANT PLAYS[1]

If the supposed ruggedness of Aeschylus is deceptive because it covers an underlying continuity of harmony, the smooth grace and finish of Sophocles is attended with a corresponding illusion, in so far as it tends to favour the assumption that in his hands tragedy has suffered any considerable loss of strength. A contest between the two poets must have resembled one between a wrestler of gigantic proportions and a well-knit, lithe, and sinewy adversary: as between Acheloüs and Heracles, or Orlando and Charles. Sophocles seems at first sight less than he really is, because he deliberately discards everything but what is directly conducive to the purpose of his art.

Epic breadth, spectacular magnificence, prophetic eloquence,—these are not his own peculiar qualities, and he rather dissembles that share of them which he inherits. Relying absolutely as

[1] Books to consult: Müller's *History of Greek Literature*; Green's "Classical Writers"; *Sophocles in English Verse*, etc.

he does on dramatic and tragic presentation, his secret lies in the profound truth with which the central situation of each fable, with its essential human motive, is felt and realised.

The attempt to fix the chronological order and position of his extant plays is attended with more uncertainty than exists in the case of Aeschylus. But the problem is also one of less importance, as all the seven belong to the maturity of the tragic art and of the poet's industry. Internal probability rather points to the *Antigone* as the earliest of them, and a fairly corroborated tradition assigns it to the most brilliant period of the career of Pericles, when the poet had attained his fifty-fifth year—eighteen years after the date of his first tragic victory. The *Philoctetes* is known, with whatever of certainty attaches to the *didascaliae*, to have been produced in 409 B.C., when the author was at least eighty-five. The *Oedipus Coloneus*, which tradition likewise attributes to his old age, is said to have been put upon the stage still later; in fact, after the writer's death. But those were troublous times in Athens, and it seems probable on the whole that the great drama, then first produced, had been composed in 411 B.C., the year of the revolution of the Four Hundred. There remains an interval of about thirty years, at uncertain points in which are to be placed the *Ajax, Electra, Oedipus Tyrannus*, and *Trachiniae*.

The *Ajax* may possibly be earlier even than the *Antigone*; the *Electra* is probably subsequent to them both; but the use of the ekkyklema, which occurs only in the *Ajax*, *Antigone*, and *Electra* amongst the plays of Sophocles, may be taken as indicating a comparatively early date for all three. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* this crude expedient is dispensed with. The blinded Oedipus is not "discovered," but enters falteringly, groping his way. The ekkyklema is likewise absent from *Trachiniae*, *Philoctetes*, *Oedipus Coloneus*. It is probable enough that Sophocles should have anticipated Aristophanes in discrediting this somewhat clumsy feature of the early stage.

The description of the plague in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* has been thought by some critics to have remote reference to the visitation in 430 B.C., the second year of the Peloponnesian war; and I have myself suspected an obscure allusion, in the *Trachiniae*, to the Spartan captives from Sphacteria. This would give to this play a date which is otherwise not improbable, about 423 B.C. These considerations taken together may justify the order—

Antigone, *Ajax*
Electra
Oedipus Tyrannus

Trachiniae
Oedipus Coloneus
Philoctetes

But the only point of importance is to observe that the *Oedipus Coloneus* and the *Philoctetes* were amongst the poet's latest works, belonging to the last decade or so of the great fifth century, that they were subsequent to the disaster at Syracuse, and had been preceded by many successes of Euripides. It is natural, on all these grounds, to look for some change of manner in them.

Concentration is the leading note of Sophoclean art. The audience of an Aeschylean tragedy are, it may be said, "spectators of all time and all existence." Mighty issues revolve about the scene, far transcending the fate of Orestes or even of Prometheus. In the perspective painting of Sophocles, these vast surroundings fall into the background, and the feelings of the spectator are absorbed in sympathy with the chief person on the stage. The tragic effects of awe and pity are centred in an individual destiny. The fortunes of Thebes affect us less than those of Oedipus; we care more for the vindication of the honour of Ajax than for the victory of the Argives over Troy.

Yet there is a sense in which human action counts for less in Sophocles than in Aeschylus. An overruling and relentless Providence is everywhere

presupposed. The action of each drama is set in a rigid framework of fatality. Of this the spectators are from the first aware. The gods appear more rarely even than in Homer, but their operation though invisible is all-pervading. They bring about their ends through the unconscious instrumentality of men. Heroes and heroines alike, under the influence of some strong passion, make noble efforts to overcome frustration and accomplish their purposes. So far as God is with them, they succeed ; if God and Fate are opposed to them, then they fail. The disastrous blindness of human beings, at once heroic and passionate, is contrasted with the calm, predetermining foresight of the supreme powers. Matthew Arnold's lines on Byron in the *Memorial Verses* might well be applied to the Sophoclean Oedipus, Ajax, or Heracles—

> With shivering heart the strife we saw
> Of passion with Eternal Law ;
> And yet with reverential awe
> We watched the fount of fiery life
> Which served for that Titanic strife.

These powers, however, which dominate over the scene of Sophocles, are by no means blind. They mete out to every life its due and proper meed, in the interest of universal right. On individuals, indeed, a thoughtless moment, or even an

unwitting action, may be visited, as experience shows, with crushing disaster; but this only magnifies and makes honourable the majesty of the unwritten law, which our own great poet apostrophises in words which, if they do not contain a reminiscence of Sophocles, are wonderfully near to him in spirit—

> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.

That is the upper side of the shield—the divine motive, which for the most part is hidden from the persons on the stage. Meanwhile the lower and purely human side is pregnant with the most poignant awe and pity. And these emotions are enhanced by the ever-returning contrast between appearance and reality, between transient hope and brightness and unending gloom.

It is in the management of this contrast, so as to maintain a continuously ascending scale of tragic interest, that the subtle and profound genius of Sophocles is most clearly manifested.

I refrain from discussing here the verbal question whether the word "irony," by which Bishop Thirlwall and others have sought to designate this peculiar kind of tragic effect, is really applicable. Suffice it to say that, if the term is admitted (and a specific term is possibly required), its meaning

must be so far modified as to imply, not pride or exaltation in the spectator on account of his superior foresight, but rather a fresh access of compassion for one who is too blind to feel his own misfortune; a tone of feeling akin to that of the Spirit in Milton's *Comus* on perceiving the dangerous position of the innocent lady—

> Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear,
> And oh, poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
> How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!

This effect is produced both by dramatic economy and by minute turns of phrase. In both respects Sophocles may well be illustrated from Shakespeare. Compare, for instance, the stately entrance of Richard II., or Lear, with the position of either later on, or the serenity of Duncan's fatal entrance with the event, or consider the elation of Caesar before his fall. The following are a few out of many single expressions which enhance such an impression. In *Richard II.*, i. 1, Richard says of Bolingbroke—

> Were he my brother, nay, my kingdom's heir.

In iii. 3, he says to him—

> Cousin, I am too young to be your father,
> Though you are old enough to be my heir.

In *Othello* Desdemona says, in answer to Emilia's question, "Is he not jealous?"

> Who, he? I think the sun where he was born
> Drew all such humours from him.

And in *Cymbeline*, ii. 3, when Imogen has missed the stolen bracelet, she says to Pisanio—

> I do think
> I saw't this morning: confident I am
> Last night 'twas on mine arm; I kiss'd it:
> I hope it be not gone to tell my lord
> That I kiss aught but he.

The *Oedipus Tyrannus* is the stock example of this, as of other aspects of Sophoclean art, and there is something of the nature of a *tour de force* in the ingenious endeavour of Thirlwall to extend the same motive to the remaining plays. He is compelled, for example, to assume a beneficent irony (like that of the Angel in Parnell's *Hermit*), which, under the appearance of a curse, conceals a blessing. Now, in the *Oedipus Coloneus*, and also in the *Electra* and *Philoctetes*, there is a contrast indeed of the most striking kind between the present misery of the chief persons and the good things in reserve for them (in the case of Philoctetes, victory, in that of Oedipus, eternal peace). But it is surely a violence to language to speak of the artistic management of this contrast by the name of "irony." Furthermore, in the *Trachiniae*, when Deianira's short-lived joy is dashed with well-founded jealousy, and (having

been deceived long ago by the centaur) she commits the hasty act which she repents too late, her apprehensions hit the truth only too exactly. It is "the thing she greatly fears" that "comes upon her." That also, as well as the concealment of approaching sorrow, is a note of Sophoclean tragedy—"I was not at rest, neither was I quiet, yet trouble came."

Another mode of the contrast between appearance and reality to which the word irony is hardly applicable is that between the worldly and the divine view of situation and character. Antigone appears to be crushed, but her cause is vindicated. Ajax is ruined in this life, but his grave is honoured even by his foes. Philoctetes is rejected, but the Gods have need of him. Oedipus is renounced by his countrymen, but accepted by the Gods and Theseus, and the Thebans in their dire extremity seek in vain to compass his return. This deeper contrast is most marked in the earliest and latest of the poet's extant plays. And its effect is greatly enhanced by the poetic reserve, in which the art of Sophocles is unique.

To express the substance of the preceding paragraphs more generally.—The final estimate of Sophoclean tragedy must largely depend upon the mode in which his treatment of destiny is conceived. That Aeschylus had risen on the wings of faith to a height of prophetic vision,

from whence he saw the triumph of equity and the defeat of wrong as an eternal process moving on toward one divine event; that he realised sin, retribution, responsibility, as no other ancient did, has been already seen. But it has been argued that because Sophocles is saddened by glancing down again at actual life, because in the fatalism of the old fables he finds the reflection of a truth which experience warrants, he in so far takes a step backward as a tragic artist.[1] Now is this altogether just? The poet's value for what is highest in man is none the less because he strips it of earthly rewards, nor is his reverence for eternal law less deep because he knows that its workings are sometimes pitiless. Nor, once more, does he disbelieve in Providence, because experience has shown him that the end towards which the supreme powers lead forth mankind is still unseen. We miss something of the exultant energy of the Marathonian man; but under the grave and gentle guidance of his successor we lose nothing of the conviction that, "because right is right, to follow right were wisdom in the scorn of consequence." Not only the utter devotion of Antigone, but the lacerated innocence of Oedipus and Deianira, the tempted truth of Neoptolemus, the essential nobility of Ajax, leave an impress on the heart which is ineffaceable, and must ever serve

[1] Günther's *Tragische Kunst.*

to elevate and purify. In one respect, however, it must be admitted that Sophocles is not before his age. There is an element of unrelieved vindictiveness, not merely inherent in the fables, but inseparable from the poet's handling of some themes, which is only too consistent with the temper of the "tyrant city." Aeschylus represents this with equal dramatic vividness; but he associates it, not with heroism, but with crime.

The spectator of a Sophoclean tragedy was invited to witness the supreme crisis of an individual destiny, and was possessed at the outset with the circumstances of the decisive moment. Except in the *Trachiniae*, where the retrospective soliloquy of Deianira is intended to emphasise her lonely position, this exposition is effected through a brief dialogue, in which the protagonist may or may not take part. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* the king's entrance and his colloquy with the aged priest introduce the audience at once to the action and to the chief person. In the *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* the entrance or discovery of the hero is made more impressive by being delayed.

Immediately after the prologos, the Chorus enter, numbering fifteen, either chanting in procession, as in the *Antigone* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*, or dispersedly, as in the *Oedipus Coloneus* and *Philoctetes*, or, thirdly, as in the *Electra*, where, after

entering silently during the monody of the heroine, and taking up their position in the orchestra, they address her one by one. With a remarkable exception, to be noted presently, the Chorus, having once entered, remain to the end. They always stand in some carefully-adjusted relation to the principal figure. The elders of Thebes, whose age and coldness throw into relief the fervour and the desolation of Antigone, are the very men to realise the calamity of Oedipus, and while horror-stricken, to lament his fall. The rude Salaminian mariners are loyal to Ajax, but cannot enter into his grief. The Trachinian maidens would gladly support Deianira, who has won their hearts, but they are too young and inexperienced for the task. The noble Argive women can sympathise with the sorrows of Electra, but no sympathy can soothe her distress.

The parodos of the Chorus is followed by the first scene or epeisodion, with which the action may be said to begin. For in the course of this the spectator's interest is strongly roused by some new circumstance involving an unforeseen complication—the awakening of Ajax (*Aj.*), the burial of Polynices (*Ant.*), the dream of Clytemnestra (*El.*), the dark utterance of Teiresias (*Oed. Tyr.*), the arrival of Lichas with Iole (*Trach.*), the report of Ismene announcing Creon's coming (*Oed. Col.*), the urgent entreaty of Philoctetes crossed

by the entrance of the pretended mariner (*Phil.*) The action from this point onwards is like a steadily-flowing stream into which a swift and turbulent tributary has suddenly fallen, and the interest advances with rapid and continuous climax until the culmination is reached and the catastrophe is certain. The manner in which this is done, through the interweaving of the *ῥήσεις* and *στιχομυθία* of the dialogue with the *στάσιμα* of the Chorus and the *κομμοί* and *κομματικά* (where there is an interchange between the Chorus and the persons), is very different in different dramas, one of the principal charms of Sophocles being his power of ingenious variation in the employment of his resources. Not less admirable is the strength with which he sustains the interest after the chief turning-point or peripeteia, whether, as in the *Antigone*, by heaping sorrow upon sorrow, or, as in the first *Oedipus*, by passing from horror to tenderness and unlocking the fountain of tears. The extreme point of boldness of arrangement is reached in the *Ajax*, where the Chorus and Tecmessa, having been warned of the impending danger, depart severally in quest of the vanished hero, and thus leave not only the stage but the orchestra vacant for the soliloquy that precedes his suicide.

No such general description as has been here

attempted can give even a remote impression of the march of Sophoclean tragedy,—by what subtle, and yet firm and strongly-marked gradations the plot is unfolded; how stroke after stroke contributes to the harmonious totality of feeling; what vivid interplay, on the stage, in the orchestra, and between both, builds up the majestic ever-moving spectacle. Examine, for example, the opening scene, or πρόλογος, of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Its function is merely to propound the situation; yet it is in itself a miniature drama. First there is the silent spectacle of the eager throng of suppliants at the palace gate,—young children, youths, and aged priests. To them the king appears, with royal condescension and true public zeal. The priest expresses their heartfelt loyalty, describes the distress of Thebes, and extolling Oedipus' past services, implores him to exercise his consummate wisdom for the relief of his people. The king's reply unveils still further his incessant watchfulness and anxious care for his subjects, and he discloses a new object to their expectancy and hope. Creon, a royal person, has been sent to Delphi, and should ere now have returned with the response of Apollo. At this all hearts are trembling in suspense, when a figure is seen approaching. He is wreathed with Apollo's laurel; he looks cheerfully. What has Phoebus said? Another moment of suspense

is interposed. Then the oracle is repeated—so thrilling to the spectator who understands the story, so full of doubt and hope and dread to all the persons of the drama: "It is for the blood of Laïus—his murderers are harboured in the land of Thebes. The country must be purged." That is the culminating point of the little tragedy. While Oedipus asks for information, while in gaiety of heart he undertakes the search, while he bids the folk of Cadmus to be summoned thither, the spectators have just time to take in the full significance of what has passed, which every word that is uttered sends farther home. All this in 150 lines!

Once more, consider the employment of narrative by this great poet. The *Tyrannus* might be again adduced, but let us turn instead to the *Antigone* and the *Trachiniae*. The speech of the Messenger in the *Antigone*, the speeches of Hyllus and the Nurse in the *Trachiniae*, occur at the supreme crises of the two dramas. Yet there is no sense of any retardation in the action by the report of what has been happening elsewhere. Much rather the audience are carried breathlessly along, while each speaker brings before their mental vision the scene of which he has himself been part. It is a drama within the drama, an action rising from its starting-point in rapid climax, swift, full, concentrated, until that wave

subsides, and is followed by a moment of thrilling expectation. Nor is this all. The narrative of the Messenger is heard by Eurydice, that of Hyllus is addressed to Deianira, that of the Nurse to the Chorus of Maidens. And in each case a poignancy of tragic significance is added by this circumstance; while the ῥῆσις in the *Antigone*, and that of Hyllus in a yet higher degree, bind together in one the twofold interest of an action which might otherwise seem in danger of distracting the spectator.

So profound is the contrivance, or, to speak more accurately, such is the strength of central feeling and conception which secures the grace of unity in complexity to the Sophoclean drama.

In the *Antigone* and *Ajax*, which are probably the earliest of the seven, it is perhaps not altogether fanciful to trace some slight survival of Aeschylean influence. In the *Antigone* this appears chiefly in the connection of the plot with the preceding history and the prominence of the notion of heredity; in the *Ajax* rather in the grandiose character of the speeches and in the apparition of Athena. There is also something in the structure of the play which I have elsewhere compared to a condensed trilogy, *i.e.* the subject, consisting of the madness, death, and burial of

Ajax, might have furnished forth three consecutive plays. Nor has the art of Sophocles in either of these great dramas attained the supreme concentration of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*; but in this respect that model of Greek tragedy may be said to stand alone.

The truth is that the originality of Sophocles appears in nothing more than in the variety of style and structure which he succeeds in reconciling with severe simplicity; and it is therefore a mistake to reduce his method to any single formula. It is enough to say that certain characteristic features appear and reappear.

1. The prologos in six out of the seven plays consists of a dialogue, which lays the ground of the action and puts the spectators in possession of the main situation. This mode, which Aeschylus also adopted in his *Prometheus*, is greatly facilitated by the addition of the third actor, which is said to have been due to the invention of Sophocles. Thus Orestes and the Old Man are able to prologise in the *Electra*, while Electra, as well as the Chorus, is still absent from the scene. Antigone similarly declares her resolution in the absence of Creon and the Elders; and Odysseus reveals his plot to Neoptolemus before the entrance of Philoctetes. In the *Oedipus Coloneus* the blind man and his daughter have appeared and disappeared before

the parodos, with the temporary addition of the Athenian Stranger, the part of Theseus being held in reserve. By such expedients more opportunity is given for the interaction of opposing interests, so as to prepare for the complications which ensue. Also the first entrance or discovery of Ajax, as of Philoctetes, is rendered more impressive, and that of Electra more pathetic than it could otherwise have been. The prologos of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is singularly elaborate, introducing as it does the first complication together with the entrance of Creon, so that all the three actors are together present before the Chorus come on. In the *Trachiniae*, on the other hand, there is a recurrence (as so often happens in Euripides) to the simpler method of the *Seven* and the *Agamemnon*, and the opening speech of Deianira is practically a soliloquy. But then it should be observed that the desolate solitude in which the wife of Heracles passes her time is one chief point to be enforced in opening the play; so that here, as elsewhere, the matter really exemplified is the freedom with which the poet handles his resources.

2. Another striking feature which is common to the extant plays of Sophocles is the use which he makes of the *hyporchema*, or dancing song. In the *Antigone*, *Ajax*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and *Trachiniae* a sudden gleam of hope, preceding an

impending crisis, and known by the spectators to be illusory, prompts the Chorus to an excited strain in which anxiety gives way to a fit of gladness, contrasting forcibly with the gloom of the sequel. This belongs to the so-called irony above referred to, and also serves to relieve the monotony of sadness. In the *Electra* and *Oedipus Coloneus* the catastrophe is immediately preceded by an invocation of a more solemn kind, which, however different in tone, may be technically classed with these *hyporchemata*, as being distinct from the *stasimon*, or regular choral ode. The address to Love in the *Antigone*, and that to Sleep in the *Philoctetes*, are of a kindred order.

That the duty of managing the actors as well as of training the Chorus belonged to the author is well known. According to a credible tradition, Sophocles, because of the weakness of his voice, was the first poet who desisted from acting in his own plays. In his *Thamyras*, however, he is said to have performed on the lyre to admiration, and in his *Nausicaa* (perhaps as Protagonist) to have played gracefully the game of ball. Various minor improvements in decoration and stage-carpentry are attributed to him:—Aristotle goes so far as to say that he invented scene-painting. It is more interesting, if true, that he wrote his plays having certain actors in his eye; that he formed an association (θίασος) for the promotion

of liberal culture; and that he was the first to introduce three actors on the stage. It is asserted on the authority of Aristoxenus that Sophocles was also the first to employ Phrygian melodies. And it is easy to believe that *Ajax*, 693 foll., *Trachiniae*, 205 foll., were sung to Phrygian music, though there are strains in Aeschylus (*e.g. Choëph.* 152 foll., 423 foll.) which it is hard to distinguish essentially from these. Ancient critics had also noticed his familiarity with Homer, especially with the *Odyssey*, his power of selection, and of extracting an exquisite grace from all he touched (whence he was named the "Attic Bee"), his mingled felicity and boldness, and, above all, his subtle delineation of human nature and feeling. They observed that the balanced proportion and fine articulation of his work are such that in a single half line or phrase he often conveys the impression of an entire character.

As Sophocles is credited with the invention (above referred to) of the third actor, it is interesting to note the places in him where this expedient is undoubtedly employed.

2. To begin with the *Ajax*. (1) At the close of the prologue we have Ajax, Odysseus, and Athena. (2) And again, in the final scene, Odysseus, Teucer, and Agamemnon.

2. In the *Antigone* (1) Creon, the Watchman, and Antigone are all present at once, and again (2), Antigone, Creon, and Ismene. Both these combinations occur in the scene preceding the crisis of the play.

3. In the *Electra* (1) the Old Man tells the fictitious story of Orestes' death in the presence of both Clytemnestra and Electra; and again (2), the same person enters while Orestes and Electra are conversing after the recognition. Further (3), Electra is present when Aegisthus comes, and Orestes is discovered standing by the body of Clytemnestra. Thus Electra, Orestes, and Aegisthus all take part in the concluding scene.

4. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (1) Creon enters to Oedipus and the Priest of Zeus in the opening scene; (2) Jocasta enters to Creon and Oedipus in the midst of their altercation; (3) a messenger from Corinth has told his message to Jocasta when Oedipus re-enters; and (4), at the chief crisis, the Theban messenger is confronted with the Corinthian in the presence of the King.

3. In the *Trachiniae* (1) Hyllus enters while Deianira is conversing with her attendant. In a subsequent scene (2)

3. Lichas re-enters to Deianira and the Messenger. (3) Hyllus, the Old Man, and Heracles come in together and all speak. Thus in the *Trachiniae* the use of the third actor appears three times only.

4. In the *Philoctetes*, although the chief interest lies in the interaction of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus, there are notwithstanding four places where three actors are employed at once: (1) the entrance of the pretended Ship-master; (2) the re-entrance of Odysseus when Neoptolemus is all but persuaded to give way; (3) when Neoptolemus brings back the bow and is followed by Odysseus; and (4) the apparition of Heracles to Philoctetes and Neoptolemus at the close of the play.

9. It remains to consider the *Oedipus Coloneus*. Here the introduction of a third actor is still more frequent.

1. In the opening scene an Athenian stranger enters to Oedipus and Antigone.
2. By-and-by Ismene comes in and makes a third with her father and sister.
3. When she is gone about her offering, Theseus arrives, and Antigone continues present though she does not speak.

4. Creon enters, and his approach is notified to Oedipus by Antigone.
5. Antigone has been carried off, but Theseus enters while Creon and Oedipus are still in altercation. Theseus, Creon, and Oedipus all speak at length.
6. In the following scene, three if not four actors are required: the two maidens are restored, and Oedipus, Theseus, and Antigone all speak.
7. When Polynices comes, the scene is divided between him, his father, and his sister Antigone. Ismene must be supposed present, but does not speak. 9.
8. Polynices departs, but Theseus returns. Antigone, though she does not speak, remains upon the stage, as does also Ismene.
9. In the concluding scene, the Messenger, Antigone, Ismene, and Theseus appear to be all present at the same time. It is here that a fourth actor has been considered necessary, because Ismene takes part with her sister in the lament. It is conceivable, however, that the Messenger, after indicating the approach of the maidens, may have retired, and returned by-and-by as Theseus.

These facts confirm the impression spoken of above in Chapter III. p. 58, that the employment of a third actor was more sparing at first, and more liberal in the later period. The shortness and the simple structure of the *Trachiniae* may account for the comparative infrequency of such an expedient in this play, which need not therefore be assumed to be of an early date.

Mute persons, such as Pylades, Iole, etc., and the children Eurysakes (in *Ajax*), Antigone, and Ismene (in *Oed. Tyr.*), are not reckoned here. The introduction of children on the stage, however, was a new feature, which was afterwards further developed by Euripides.

The addition of a third actor, as already hinted, enabled Sophocles to complicate the action while preserving unity. It also lent him most important aid in giving relief by contrast to the finer shades of character.

The adaptation of character to situation is one of the capital features of the art of Sophocles. And it is promoted by two expedients, the manipulation of the fable, and the relation of the minor persons to the protagonist.

a. Aeschylus handles mythology and legend with great freedom, and has probably himself innovated or invented here and there. Sophocles is content, for the most part, to accept tradition as

he finds it; but his subtle originality is employed in taking advantage of the discrepancies of tradition. For example, the later epics had begun to vilify Odysseus, and had even represented him as the son of Sisyphus. The Odysseus of the *Ajax* is the true son of Laertes, as in the *Odyssey*, and is essentially noble. But his wise policy has been grievously misunderstood, and those to whom he has given offence (not Ajax himself, however) are never weary of reproaching him with his dishonest cunning and his unworthy origin. It is only when his real character, as inspired by Athena, has been revealed that Teucer pointedly addresses him as "Laertes' true-born son." The Odysseus of the *Philoctetes* is a different person; not altogether ignoble, but a politician prone to stratagem. Here the purpose was to contrast him with the ingenuous youth Neoptolemus, and to bring out the passionate resentment of Philoctetes, who couples Odysseus with Thersites and calls him Laertes' bargain bought from Sisyphus. This is one of many examples of similar adaptation.

b. The dignified self-possession of Odysseus in the concluding scene of the *Ajax* stands in striking contrast, not only to the brutality of Agamemnon, but to the passionateness of the hero. Shakespeare has several times employed similar means for setting off the fiery natures of his tragic persons. Hamlet's friend Horatio is

> As one suffering all that suffers nothing,
> A man who Fortune's buffets and rewards
> Hath ta'en with equal thanks.

Macbeth says of his rival, Banquo—

> 'Tis much he dares;
> And, to that dauntless tenor of his mind,
> He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
> To act in safety.

And something higher than mere wisdom appears in Banquo's own words, when tempted by Macbeth—

> *Macb.* If you shall cleave to my consent,—when 'tis,
> It shall make honour for you.
> *Ban.* So I lose none
> In seeking to augment it, but still keep
> My bosom franchised and allegiance clear,
> I shall be counselled.

Similarly the noble and calm strength of the loyal Kent adds pathos to the breaking-down of Lear. Other instances in Sophocles are the contrast of Creon with the King in the first *Oedipus*, of Haemon with Creon in the central portion of the *Antigone*, and of Theseus with the other persons in the *Oedipus Coloneus*.

A contrast of a different kind is that of the unheroic to the heroic nature. Thus Ismene is a foil to Antigone, Chrysothemis to Electra, Lichas to both Deianira and Heracles.

> 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
> Between the pass and fell incensèd points
> Of mighty opposites.

Yet another mode of contrast appears where feminine tenderness is opposed to manly strength, as in the relation of Tecmessa to Ajax; and a further point in this direction is gained by the introduction of children on the stage (*Aj.*, *Oed. Tyr.*) With regard to the similarity in the type of certain characters in Sophocles it is to be observed that, with the exception of the weak Chrysothemis and of Jocasta, whose strength has been for evil, all the women in the seven plays of Sophocles are capable of heroic self-devotion, even when deprived of their natural support. This is a new feature; for, as elsewhere observed, none of Aeschylus' women, except the criminal Clytemnestra, is capable of acting alone. The Oceanides are more than human, and their persistence is in vain. They are not able to drink the cup the Titan drinks of. Deianira acts with weak precipitation, it may be; but she will not survive the ruin of her love, and is heroic in her death. So is Eurydice, the Theban mother. Ismene is willing to die with Antigone, though she would not disobey the King. And Tecmessa, the poor captive, not only is the first to find her expiring lord, but even before the arrival of Teucer breathes defiance over his corpse against his enemies.

Antigone and Electra may seem at first sight to be of a different mould. Yet the motive of their heroism is not less essentially feminine than the self-sacrifice of these lesser women.

The love of kindred, especially of a father and a brother, is felt by Sophocles to be the glory of womanhood. This passion—a love which many waters cannot quench—appears in Antigone as an uncontrollable impulse, acknowledged by her as divine; in Electra as the never-weakening spring of an insuppressible endurance. Whether to admire most the young virgin-martyr appealing from the tyrant to the Eternal Law, or the mature maiden, withering on the virgin thorn, who after ten years of servile oppression borne in the still-deferred hope of a brother's return—the brother whom she herself had rescued—on hearing of his death resolves by herself alone to do the vengeful deed that had been looked for from his arm, this, in common with the ancient epigrammatist, I find it a hard matter to decide. Perhaps the best solution is that while the action of Antigone is more beautiful, that of Electra (granting vengeance to be a duty) is the more admirable. Neither of them, indeed, wrings the heart of the spectator so irresistibly as Deianira—the rival of Imogen in purity, of Catherine of Aragon in her "great patience," and of both in wifely spirit.

Sophocles is often praised for skilful construction. But the secret of his skill depends in large measure on the profound way in which the central situation in each of his fables has been conceived and felt. Concentration is the distinguishing mark of tragedy, and it is above all by greater concentration that Sophocles is distinguished from other tragic poets. In the *Seven against Thebes* or the *Prometheus* there is still somewhat of epic enlargement and breadth; in the *Hecuba* and other dramas of Euripides single scenes have an idyllic beauty and tenderness which affect us more than the progress of the action as a whole—a defect which the poet sometimes tries to compensate by some novel *dénoûment* or catastrophe. But in following a Sophoclean tragedy we are carried steadily and swiftly onward, looking neither to the right nor to the left: the more elaborately any scene or single speech is wrought, the more does it contribute to enhance the main emotion, and if there is a deliberate pause, it is felt either as a welcome breathing-space or as the calm of brooding expectancy.

The result of this method is the union, in the highest degree, of simplicity with complexity, of largeness of design with absolute finish, of grandeur with harmony. Superfluities are thrown off without an effort through the burning of the fire within. Crude elements are fused and made transparent.

What look like ornaments are found to be inseparable from the organic whole. Each of the plays is admirable in structure, not because it is cleverly put together, but because it is so completely alive.

It must always seem curious that Sophocles, who was himself, by all accounts, the gentlest and most amenable of men, should have delighted, as he does in the *Philoctetes* and also in the *Oedipus Coloneus*, not only to sound the depths of tragic passion, but to display the tyrannous dominance of a fixed idea. Nothing but the miraculous intervention of Heracles can for a moment soften the obstinate determination of the hero to refuse his aid to the Achaeans, though he must remain and perish in the desert isle. The conclusion of the *Philoctetes* is the only instance in Sophocles of the *deus ex machinâ* of which Euripides is so fond (for the apparition of Athena in the prologos of the *Ajax* is rather a survival of Aeschylean supernaturalism). And there are other points, such as the double turn or peripeteia, and the external business with the bow, which indicate that the latest manner of Sophocles had something in common with the method of Euripides. But the management both of the plot and characters is entirely Sophoclean, and there is no play in which the poet more distinctly proves his

unique originality. The invention of the part of Neoptolemus, and the sustained interplay or interaction of contrasted natures—between the generous youth whom ambition has bent for a moment to deceit and the time-worn solitary man in whom cruel usage and long pain have killed ambition, yet whose heart within him is still fresh and young—is a masterpiece of dramatic evolution, which for its combination of psychological interest with stage effectiveness is unequalled in ancient and unsurpassed in modern art.

It cannot be said, however, that the *Philoctetes* has a tragic ending in the strictest sense. And although the *Oedipus Coloneus* concludes with the death of Oedipus, than which nothing can be more sublimely impressive, yet both pathos and horror are softened by the assurance of peace and victory for Athens which he bequeaths to the guardians of his tomb. Together with the decay of hope and national pride which followed the reversal of Athenian power at Syracuse there seems to have come a shrinking from such "tragic completeness" as we find in the *Antigone*, *Ajax*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Electra*, and *Trachiniae*. Melpomene relaxes somewhat the severity of her brows. Of the plays which Euripides is known to have produced after 413 B.C., viz. *Helena*, *Phoenissae*, *Electra*, *Orestes*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Bacchae*, the *Bacchae* is said to have been composed in Macedonia for production

at the Court of Archelaus; and of the other five, the *Phoenissae*, produced in 411 B.C., the year of revolution, is the only one which *ends* tragically. Sensational horrors occur incidentally; but Apollo, or Artemis, or the Dioscuri, set all to rights at last.

The sun of tragedy, when it gained its ascendant in the Aeschylean trilogy, was still struggling amidst louring clouds, to which it lent a lurid magnificence. In the *Antigone* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*, having reached its meridian height, it is shorn of that gorgeous array, but looks fiercely down upon the world, though with seemingly diminished disc, in lonely splendour and with concentrated heat. Rolling westward in the *Oedipus Coloneus*, it gazes back upon mankind with milder beams; and if some clouds return, as in the curse on Polynices or the ode on the miseries of age, they are finally transfigured with the promise of an ampler day.

CHAPTER XIII

EURIPIDES[1]

THE judgments of modern critics on Euripides have been strangely various. On the one hand, the cavils of Aristophanes have found many echoes in the modern world. And this has not been merely due to the authority of Schlegel and other writers. The just appreciation of Aeschylus and Sophocles impresses on the mind a standard of dramatic art to which their great successor did not, and could not, conform. The secret of his influence is not their secret. His aim is different from theirs, perhaps less elevated, but his success as an original poet is notwithstanding very real and wide. If none of his works produces so noble and far-reaching an impression as the Orestean trilogy, or that entire and flawless chrysolite the *Antigone*, yet some tones of his many-stringed lyre have

[1] Books to consult: Art. "Euripides" in *Ency. Brit.* by R. C. Jebb; Mommsen's *History of Rome*, vol. ii. (Eng. Trans.) pp. 444-446; Symonds' *Greek Poets*; Browning's *Aristophanes' Apology*; Froude's *Short Studies*; Bunsen's *God in History*, Eng. Trans. pp. 234-244; Milman's *Bacchae*, etc.

sounded on beyond the Sibyl's thousand years and have awakened echoing chords in places which to the strains of Aeschylus and Sophocles have remained mute. If he has had many detractors, his admirers have not been of mean repute. Euripides, and not Sophocles, was "sad Electra's poet" to the muse of Milton, whose choral "apolelymena" in *Samson Agonistes* are probably imitated from the Euripidean monodies. He was thought worthy of imitation by Racine and also by Goethe, who not only wrote his *Iphigenie* on lines suggested by Euripides, but when the fragments of the *Phaëthon* were discovered on a palimpsest forming part of the Codex Claromontanus of St. Paul's Epistles, and were communicated to him through Hermann, his imagination was greatly excited and, with Göttling's help, he made a serious effort towards a reconstruction of that play.[1] He returned to the subject afterwards, in 1823 and 1826, and also in the last-mentioned year attempted to supply the missing speech of Agavè in the *Bacchae* (*Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. 1851, pp. 336-356). In our own time Robert Browning "transcribed" the *Agamemnon*, but

[1] One remark of Goethe's in this connection deserves to be quoted here with reference to what has been said above (ch. ii. p. 35) concerning the Unity of Time: "Das dargestellte in einer gewissen Zeit unmöglich geschehen kann und doch geschieht. Auf dieser Fiction des Dichters und der Zustimmung des Hörers und Schauers ruht die oft angefochten und immer wiederkehrende dramatische Zeit- und Orts-Einheit der Alten und Neueren."

with less perfect sympathy than he showed in recasting the *Alcestis* or in translating the *Hercules Furens*, that "perfect piece," as his Balaustion calls it. The poet's imagination finds completeness in the incomplete. Mr. Froude has devoted to Euripides one of the most ingenious and eloquent of his *Short Studies*. And if we turn again to antiquity, the popularity of Euripides in Macedonian and Alexandrian times is shown by the number of his tragedies (eighteen) which have been preserved—a fact of which it is also right to take account before comparing him unfavourably with Aeschylus or Sophocles. For if we believe that on the whole Time has made a wise selection, such comparative judgment should be confined to the seven plays (whichever they are) which are selected from the eighteen extant tragedies as the best. There is no great difficulty in preferring six, viz. *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Ion*, *Bacchae*, *Phoenissae*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*. For the seventh one is left in doubt amongst three others, the *Hercules Furens*, *Alcestis*, *Electra*. And yet the materials for judgment are not complete. For those single scenes, descriptions, situations, passages, in which the strength of Euripides often lies, are scattered everywhere. How can we rule out of court the relation of the death of Polyxena in the *Hecuba*, the apostrophe to Zeus in the *Troades*, or the opening scenes of the *Orestes*, or,

again, the colloquy between Agamemnon and Menelaus in the *Iphigenia in Aulis*? Euripides abounds with "beauties." And it is partly for this reason, as well as from his world-wide popularity, that his fragments are so numerous, or, in other words, that quotations from him are so frequent in Plutarch, in Clement of Alexandria, in Athenaeus, and in the *Florilegium* (or anthology) of Stobaeus. Nor can we be certain that to a modern taste such romantic plays as the *Phaëthon* and the *Andromeda* would not have been more pleasing than the *Medea*. The real difficulty is to apprehend his dramatic point of view, his prevailing *motive*. And this depended, as it must always do, upon the audience for whom he wrote.[1]

Tragedy was not now, as in the Periclean time, the main or central exponent of Athenian feeling. The national life no longer mirrored itself objectively in the idealising of heroic legend. The simple proverbial philosophy of the Solonian period was being replaced by a species of casuistry. Moral consciousness was undermining Greek mythology. The dilemma which Plato puts so forcibly, "either the gods are evil, or the

[1] "I dare establish it for a rule of practice on the stage, that we are bound to please those whom we pretend to entertain; and that at any price, religion and good manners only excepted . . . there is a sort of merit in delighting the spectators, which is a name more proper for them, than that of auditors."—Dryden.

tales which poets tell of them are untrue," was already dimly felt by many and confused their thoughts. Ionian "Physiology" (*i.e.* the philosophy of Anaxagoras and his predecessors) was another solvent. The breach thus made was superficially healed by a crude rationalism. As thought had made the gods, so thought might modify them. Meanwhile the decline of Athens and the many vicissitudes of private fortune "sicklied o'er" the restless mental activity of the time with a new species of pessimistic fatalism, and in this aspect the old dark tradition of divine malignity commended itself afresh. The caprice of the Supernatural became a fitting symbol for the blind work of Chance.[1] On the other hand, men had begun to realise the claims of a common humanity, and the words of Socrates: "Can it

[1] See De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Reeve's translation), vol. i. chap. xiv. "But epochs sometimes occur, in the course of the existence of a nation, at which the ancient customs of a people are changed, religious belief disturbed, and the spell of tradition broken; while the diffusion of knowledge is yet imperfect. . . . The country then assumes a dim and dubious shape in the eyes of the citizens; they no longer behold it in the soil which they inhabit, for that soil is to them a dull inanimate clod; nor in the usages of their forefathers, which they have been taught to look upon as a debasing yoke; nor in religion, for of that they doubt; nor in the laws, which do not originate in their own authority. . . . They entrench themselves within the dull precincts of a narrow egotism. They are emancipated from prejudice, without having acknowledged the empire of reason; they are animated neither by instinctive patriotism nor by thinking patriotism . . . but they have stopped half-way between the two, in the midst of confusion and distress."—(Quoted by Sir A. C. Lyall in *Asiatic Studies*.)

ever be just to harm a human being?" found hearers not totally unprepared. "The gods care for Troy also" (Euripides' *Andromache*, 1251 ff.) From these and other causes Euripidean tragedy has often the effect of a magnificent *tour de force*. Dramatic creation is still bound within the cycle of legendary mythology. Artistic convention and popular feeling alike demanded the limitation. The experiment of Agathon came later. But the traditions could be more freely handled than heretofore, and the fable was more distinctly felt to be merely the vehicle through which an impression was to be conveyed.[1] For proof of this we have to look no farther than to the story of Helen as represented in the *Helena*, and as given or understood in the *Orestes*, *Andromache*, and elsewhere. Aeschylus and Sophocles in different ways had adapted tradition to the purpose of their art, but we cannot suppose that either would have ventured on such inconsistency as this, although the newer version of the fable was known to Stesichorus and Herodotus. The variation in the Iphigenia story is hardly less striking. And in both the same rationalising, accommodating, and reconciling spirit has been at

[1] Cp. Miss Harrison's *Attic Mythology*, p. cxx. "The latter end of the 5th century B.C.,—a time when the vase-painter was beginning to concern himself more with the skill of his grouping, the graceful pose of his figures, and the dexterity of his drawing, than with his mythological intent."

work. (See especially Euripides' *Electra*, 1282, 1283.) But it is manifest that neither story can have had for the audience a reality of the same order with the legend of the Telamonian Ajax as presented to the men of Salamis by Aeschylus and Sophocles in succession.[1] A like distinction holds between supernatural appearances in Aeschylus and Euripides. The Erinyes, Apollo, Hephaestus, Athena had a reality for the earlier audience (whose fathers had worshipped Phya for Athena) very different from any that could attach to Madness, led in by Iris, or to the Dioscuri, or to Athena herself and other deities appearing on the raised platform above the later stage. Not the divine persons themselves so much, but rather the idea they symbolised, would impress the intelligent spectator of a Euripidean play.

The great painters of the Venetian school often represented the Christ and His Apostles in the garb and environment that were familiar to the Italian world. Even a negro slave is introduced in the Marriage at Cana by Paul Veronese. Such anachronisms were never entirely absent from the Attic theatre. But the practice is greatly extended by Euripides, not so much, of course, in the matter of dress — although

[1] Where Aeschylus and Sophocles have followed different versions of a legend, Euripides is sometimes eclectic: *e.g.* in acknowledging both Argos and Mycenae, and making Menelaus live at Argos while he rules at Sparta.

the realism of his ragged garments and other outward signs of misery provoked the scorn of Aristophanes,—but in thought and tone of feeling his personages, as has often been remarked, come very near to the men and women of his own time. And by this means there is no doubt that he succeeded in universally touching his audience, if not in profoundly moving them. The reflections of Orestes in his sickness, *e.g.*—*μεταβολὴ πάντων γλυκύ*, "Change in everything is sweet"—may seem to us commonplace generalities, having little to do with either poetry or the drama,[1] but they found a clear echo in the contemporary Athenian breast. And it may appear to us strange and unnatural that a prophet or a hero should reason about the probability of a god's existence, or rationalise the legend of his birth (*Bacchae*, 290, 333 ff.) But such things must have precisely hit the imaginative half-belief of the men and women with whom the poet had to do.[2] We have heard a sermon in which it was explained that the angels who carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom were "laws of Nature." Such pious exposition may find many parallels in Euripidean belief. Some lines of the *Troades*

[1] "There is yet another obstacle to be removed, which is,—pointed wit, and sentences out of season; these are nothing of kin to the violence of passion; no man is at leisure to make sentences and similes, when his soul is in agony."—Dryden.

[2] See Browning's *Ring and Book—The Pope*, *s. f.*

(884-888) well illustrate the manner in which mythology was becoming transfused in terms of thought :—

> O Earth's upholder, who on Earth dost dwell,
> Whoe'er thou art, past finding out, whate'er
> Thy name be, Zeus, or Necessary Law
> Of Nature, or the Mind of mortal Man,
> I worship thee, for still with noiseless tread
> Thou guid'st all human things the Righteous way.

The concluding line, however, expresses a firmer faith than is often present in Euripides. The newly-discovered fragment of the *Antiopa* is very characteristic of the artificial compromise between scepticism and piety which we often find in him. Amphion and Zethus are the sons of Antiopa by Zeus, who appears to have deserted her. Like the brothers of Imogen, these children of Nature have been brought up in rustic seclusion. Their mother has been persecuted by Lycus and his wife Dircè, the reigning powers at Thebes. The young men have slain Dircè, and have planned an ambush for Lycus, with whom their case is desperate. Amphion, addressing his mother, gives utterance to this counsel of despair :—

> Speak not of flight ! In vain were Zeus our sire
> Not to avenge us of our enemy.
> And howsoe'er, we have reached a pass in woe
> Where flight is hopeless, retribution sure
> For Dircè's blood new slain. If we stand fast,

One of two things must be. Either we die
This day, or triumph o'er our adversaries.
So far to thee, my mother. Then to Thee
Who dwellest in the bright etherial land
Thus bold I speak: "Taste not of marriage-joy
And afterward neglect thine offspring's weal;
But, as high Honour bids, defend thine own."
Howe'er it prove, decoy we now our prey
To a convenient lucky harbourage,
And overpower the impious tyrant there.

In the sequel, Hermes appears, prevents the slaughter of Lycus, procures his voluntary submission, and declares Amphion the true heir of Cadmus and builder of the new city of Thebes.

This pleasant *dénoûment* satisfies the claims of ordinary piety; but the sceptical reclamation of Amphion would leave a deeper impression on the educated and intelligent auditor.

A similar vein of thought is apparent here and there in Sophocles, but is so introduced as to have the effect only of a passing shadow, as where Hyllus expostulates with Zeus for looking on at the agony of Heracles,—when every Greek is well aware of the glory that shall follow; or where Tecmessa follows Ajax's example, and in her bitterness cries out against Athena; or lastly where Philoctetes, in the despair that is born of his exile, is led to doubt the goodness of the gods in the manner of the *fin du siècle V^me^ B.C.* But although in these few instances there is a real approach

to what is so frequent in Euripides, the tone and accentuation are widely different.

The figment of divine intervention, or celestial magic, which in the *Antiopa* appears to justify the ways of Zeus, is elsewhere introduced merely as a conventional expression for the unaccountable, irrational, and cruelly capricious course of human things.

The growth of reflection and self-consciousness was accompanied with a novel sense of human brotherhood, akin to that expressed by Aristotle where he says, "one may find in travelling how much of kinship and of kindness exists between man and man." The feeling of distinctive patriotism was becoming merged in that of a common human nature. It is here that Euripides most anticipates modern feeling. The humble and yet noble yeoman in the *Electra*, the slave and fellow-captive of Andromache, who still treats her mistress with respect, the Chorus in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, who are reminded of their own parents' fortune (576), may be cited as examples of this new spirit, which does not, however, preclude the recognition of the supposed fact, so regarded also by Aristotle, of the persistence of an essentially servile nature in certain races—the Phrygian for example. Nor does this increasing mildness of mood towards humanity in general prevent the occasional recrudescence of an abnormal savagery in dealing

with an enemy. Electra and Orestes are profoundly penitent, and the Time-Spirit has convinced them that no so-called divine sanction could extenuate matricide; but the revenge of Hecuba on Theoclymenus, and that of Alcmena on Eurystheus, the death of Dircè tied to the tail of a wild bull, can only be compared to the act of Samuel in hewing Agag in pieces before the Lord. These instances reveal the

> Tiger's heart wrapped in a "civic" hide,

which was capable of such enormities as the sentence on the Lesbian people and the massacre at Melos. Hence—while these and similar incidents, by rendering the chief person less worthy of sympathy, detract something from the value of the drama in which they occur, if judged by an absolute or universal standard—at the time of production they were liable to no such stricture, but doubtless carried forward powerfully and without a check the stream of emotion which the precedent action had set going.

The indulgence of contemporary feeling has another aspect. The age delighted in intellectual novelties, and commonplace is consequently apt to assume the form of paradox. The audience of Euripides were at once pleased and startled by the asceticism of Hippolytus, the temperate and chaste enthusiasm of the true Bacchanal (cp. Plato), the

remorse of Hermione, the bravery of old Peleus, the cowardice of the professed warrior, the religious purity of Ion as a sort of Samuel or Timothy, the forgivingness of Iphigenia, the destiny which is stronger than the gods (*I. T.* 1486).

A speaker in the *Protesilaus* (455 N.) seems to have anticipated Plato's community of marriage (cp. the Agathyrsi in Herod. iv. 104). One strikingly modern touch occurs in *Orestes*, 1288, "Have the swords that were aimed at Helen been blunted by her beauty?" This must have been present to the mind of Lord Tennyson when he wrote his "Lucretius"—

> Then, then, from utter gloom stood out the breasts,
> The breasts of Helen, and hoveringly a sword
> Now over and now under, now direct,
> Pointed itself to pierce, *but sank down shamed*
> *At all that beauty.*

Some recurring novelties of situation and sentiment deserve to be mentioned more at length.

1. *Self-abnegation.*—The stories concerning a survival of human sacrifice which abounded in Greek legend are repeatedly employed by Euripides to accentuate the worth of voluntary self-devotion. There is a strong family resemblance amongst such willing victims in his plays—Macaria, Polyxena, Iphigenia, Menoeceus, etc., though of course with individual differences. They are all too much inclined to reason out the grounds of

their own action. This seems to have been the case also with Praxithea, the wife of Erechtheus, who gave up her child for Athens. Mr. Swinburne, in his drama on the last-named subject, and Mr. Browning in characterising Alcestis, have corrected this fault of the older poet. Still the merit must be conceded to him of having perceived the value of a motive, by which suffering is ennobled, and pity is enhanced with admiration.

2. *Paternity.*—The care of a father for his son appears with pathetic effect in the *Erechtheus* and the *Phaëthon.* Erechtheus exhorts his son before going to the battle, and Helios gives vain counsel to his adventurous child.

Still more modern in effect is the poignant grief, of which Brabantio's for Desdemona, and Leonato's for the slandered Hero, are familiar instances in Shakespeare. Nycteus kills himself when he believes that shame has come to his daughter Antiopa; Catreus gives his daughters Aërope and Clymene to Nauplius to be drowned; Minos is naturally horrified when Zeus has "made him grandsire" to the Minotaur.

3. *First-love.*—A capital innovation in tragedy, which to Plato and others appeared morally ruinous, and to Aeschylus, and perhaps to Sophocles, would have seemed a falling off from dignity, was the sympathetic treatment of the passion of love. Aristophanes' contemptuous allusion to Phaedra is

well known. But his Dionysus, who though personally too susceptible for dignity is a severe critic, was evidently captivated by the *Andromeda*, the reading of which on board ship had moved his desire to recover Euripides. And, indeed, it is not difficult to imagine the effect which the powerful treatment for the first time in serious drama of a pure attachment under romantic circumstances must have produced on an audience who were becoming more accessible to the softer harmonies. One speech of the heroine to her deliverer very closely resembles that of Miranda to Ferdinand:—

> To be your fellow
> You may deny me, but I'll be your servant
> Whether you will or no.[1]

If Euripides is to be judged not as a tragic but as a romantic poet, he shows a considerable advance in the delineation of natural feeling and the development of pathetic situations. We trace his progress in this direction from such comparatively regular dramas as the *Medea* and *Hippolytus* to the *Electra* and the *Orestes*. But the advance is also a decline. The transition towards the middle comedy is already begun.

By a convention of the contemporary stage, the familiar figures of heroic legend no longer represent the extraordinary as in Aeschylus, or the

[1] "Sir, take me with you, whether as your servant,
Or wife, or handmaid."—Fragment 133 (Nauck).

ideal as in Sophocles, but ordinary human nature subjected to exceptional circumstances. The legend is to a great extent discounted—we no longer expect to find it convincing. What we do expect is to have true pathos distilled from each situation in turn, and to have thought stimulated with suggestions which, whether new or old, are seen at once to be of wide application. To a taste formed by Aeschylus or Sophocles the sentiment sometimes appears sickly, or even frigid, and the moralising is often overdone. But to the Athenian all this had the effect of a new *genre*, a fresh departure in dramatic art, and it was applauded accordingly. Neither can we deny that in the larger horizons which begin to open in Euripides there are anticipations of untried possibilities, such as were afterwards realised in different ways by Menander, Shakespeare, and Molière. Again, if Euripides were judged, not as a dramatist, but as an idyllic poet, many narrative and descriptive passages might claim unrivalled charm. Or if we selected his best lyrics, they would be hard to beat. And it is partly due to the circumstances in which his lot was cast that as a dramatic poet he so seldom approaches the grandeur of Aeschylus, or the perfection of Sophocles.

Tragedy, as represented by Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides, may be regarded under the

image of a mighty river, which in its earlier course (seeming to tumble from the sky) rolls its foaming and seething waters down a rugged glen: by-and-by between trim banks it flows with deep smooth current, but with impetuous force, until it nears the plain, through which in alternate stream and pool it glides amongst a varied landscape, now lapping tree-fringed shores, now mimicking the earlier torrent for a while, and now reflecting laughingly on its calm expanse the more distant heaven.

In the structure and fabric of his plays particularly, Euripides anticipates to some extent the complexity of modern drama. He is in a sense the originator of dramatic intrigue. His tragedies have "many turns." But he does not escape from the inconvenience pointed out by Dryden as attending this mode of construction. What is gained in freshness and variety of incident is lost in concentration and in force of characterisation. "For the manners can never be evident, where the surprises of fortune take up all the business of the stage, and where the poet is more in pain to tell you what has happened to such a man, than what he was." "Too many accidents, as I have said, encumber the poet; for the variety of passions which they produce are ever crossing and jostling each other out of the

way." In some of his dramas, such as the *Orestes* and *Antiopa*, it is hardly too much to say that Euripides contented himself with unity of subject, where unity of action is required by dramatic art. And sometimes for the sake of a rhetorical point both character and action are marred. Jason says to Medea, "You helped me, it is true, but then you were in love, and you got something by it." Such a man, of course, deserves anything; but would the death of his children affect him deeply?

In some respects the art of Euripides has a misleading superficial resemblance to that of Aeschylus. In both there are appearances of gods. The dialogue in both is apt to be dilated with superfluous narrative and description. In both the lyric element is larger than in Sophocles.

But (1) the supernatural in Aeschylus has a convincing reality which it could not have for the spectators, or rather audience, of Euripides, who at the very moment when they were thrilled with some exhibition of supernal power, were inclined to question the goodness, and even the existence, of the gods. (See Eur. *Andromache*, 1161-1165.) In listening to Thetis inviting Peleus to share her immortality, the illusion can hardly have been complete where Peleus takes occasion to observe, "How good it is to have

made a prudent marriage!" It is not too much to say that the destiny of Cadmus and Harmonia was poetically realised more completely by Matthew Arnold than by Euripides.

When Aeschylus says, "Zeus, whosoe'er he be," he is speaking with profound awe of the ineffable name that, as Heraclitus says, "both wills and wills not to be known." The tone in which Euripides says, "Zeus, whoever Zeus may be," belongs to a different strain of agnosticism. He has come to think of Zeus (see above) as a conventional symbol for "Laws of Nature." But while mythology was thus honeycombed with rationalism, it was also receiving new developments. Both processes went on side by side. Though each of the old legends had become "a tale of little meaning," men delighted in them none the less. Foreign rituals, such as Cretan Orphism, were grafted upon Attic superstition. And reflection on a myth might assist in giving to it a secondary formation. Thus, when the acquittal of Orestes by Athena and the Areopagus had failed to satisfy the more cultivated moral sense, his further wanderings, pursued by a remnant of the Furies, were added as an appendix to the story. This afterthought was associated with another legend, which may have been suggested by the ritual of the Brauronian Artemis. The real Iphigenia is here supposed to have been

spirited away at the time of the sacrifice, and to have been recovered, together with the sacred *ξόανον*, or primitive idol of the goddess, from the Tauric Chersonese.

The state of mind in which men listened greedily to the tales of priest and prophet, and yet reasoned about them—wavering between belief and scepticism—is difficult to apprehend, and yet bears some analogy to the mental condition of a time like our own, in which, for many reasons, a musical ritual serves as the *euthanasia* of positive belief, and a learned curiosity about the origin and history of religion is taking the place of a strong and active faith.

(2) If the speeches in Aeschylus are sometimes expanded beyond the strict requirements of the action, this naturally arises from the fulness and exuberance of his imagination, and from the eager curiosity which the action has directly stimulated in the spectator. But Euripides pauses, even at critical moments, to moralise a situation, or to adorn a narrative with graphic details. And where Aeschylus makes direct appeal to Hellenic or Athenian patriotism, he does it in such a manner as to secure universal sympathy. But this can hardly be said of the political or patriotic passages in the *Heraclidae*, the *Supplices*, or the *Andromache*, which have a narrower scope and a more bitter flavour.

(3) The lyrical part in Aeschylus is amplified because the Chorus is still so important to the action; but in Euripides the *stasima*, *monodies*, and *threnodies* are "long drawn out" because the action itself is less engrossing, and the audience are more at leisure to dwell on the general sentiments and reflections which it suggests, and to indulge in the enjoyment of musical effects.

The language of Euripides is often picturesque and "sensuous" rather than "simple and passionate." He sometimes employs words and phrases more for their "colour" and associations than for their exact significance. But he is also capable of the most unaffectedly pathetic utterance—as in *Andromache* 384-420,[1] and in well-known

[1] The following is the speech of Andromache above referred to; Menelaus has attempted to induce her to leave the sanctuary of the altar by threatening to kill her son:—

"O hard election! Cruel offerer
Of life with misery or unhappy death!
O mighty pother for a trifling cause!
Why wouldst thou slay me? For what fault? Consider.
What town have I betrayed? What son of thine
Killed I? What home set fire to?—By compulsion
I married him whom fortune made my lord.
Then wouldst thou slay me and not him? The will,
The first beginning of the act, was his.
You strike at me on whom the end is come.
O me unhappy! Native land of mine,
How in thy fall I am ruined! Why, oh why
Must I have children, doubling all my woe?
Nay, let me not lament till I have drained
My cup of present sorrow. I have seen

speeches of the *Medea*, *Alcestis*, and *Hecuba*. See also the speech of Cadmus in *Bacchae*, *s.f.* (where that of Agavè is unfortunately lost.[1]) It is to be observed as further proof of the relaxation of tragic severity that children not only appear upon the stage, but are allowed to speak (*Alcestis*, *Her. Fur.*; cp. Aristoph. *Ranae*, 948).

On the whole, one sees that in Euripides the tragic art is in course of being transformed, descending from its pedestal so as to reap more from the "lacrymae rerum," the tearfulness of

> "Hector expiring at the chariot-wheel,
> And Ilion's piteous fires; then as a captive,
> Unto the Argive ships dragged by the hair,
> I came to Phthia, where my husband's murderer
> Must be my husband! What is life to me?
> What hope does time, present or past, afford?
> One child I have, the comfort of mine eye,
> All that remains to me from vanished days;—
> They would destroy him!—Not if death of me
> May buy him off. Hope gilds his living head.
> But shame were mine, not dying for my boy.
> Behold, I leave the altar. I am thine
> To bind, to smite, to strangle. Child, to save thee
> From death thy mother dies. I go. But thou,
> Escaping from the threatful hurricane,
> Remember my affliction and mine end.
> And tell thy father, kissing him with tears,
> And clinging round him with thy arms of love,
> What griefs were mine.—Our children are our souls.
> If any blame that maxim, having none,
> He is spared much sorrow; but his gain is loss,
> And in privation stands his envied state."

[1] Both Goethe and Dean Milman have attempted to restore it.

common things, but also tending somewhat towards melodrama and losing some of its central fire. What Aristotle means by calling him "the most tragic of poets," is to our apprehension rather a "sentimental" or "sensational" tendency. What remains of genuine tragic effect has become more self-conscious, more subjective. In some places, however, the very feebleness of the characterisation has the result of sending home a grand impression of the overmastering force of circumstance, of the predominance of the collective over the individual will,—so hinting powerfully at "*the whole tragedy and comedy of human life.*" No instance of this is more remarkable than the treatment in the *Iphigenia in Aulis* of the crushing and irresistible force of popular clamour, the

Civium ardor prava jubentium.

Agamemnon has reluctantly consented to the sacrifice of his daughter, but has afterwards repented. In time, however, he again yields her to the pleadings of his brother Menelaus. Then Menelaus in his turn recoils before the grief which Agamemnon has shown, and urges him to take back his gift. But the General only now becomes aware of the resistless power which in reality is constraining him. He cannot, if he would, recall his consent. Once more—Iphigenia has been taken from her mother through the

pretence that she is to be married to Achilles. That hero's chivalrous spirit recoils from the policy that has made him the stalking-horse of such a scheme. He declares his opposition. But when he has done so, his own Myrmidons are the first to rise against him. Even his valour is powerless to save the predestined victim. Then, "at long last," the maiden herself makes a virtue of necessity and becomes (like Macaria and the rest) a voluntary sacrifice. The characters, except that of Achilles, are flat and unimpressive, —that of Iphigenia, as Aristotle says, is decidedly inconsistent, — but the main situation is driven home with masterly force and emphasis.

It is in reading such sad lessons of experience that Euripides excels, much more than in holding up any great ideal either of individual or of national life. His Athenian patriotism is occasionally keen, but it is on the one hand embittered with party spirit, and on the other diluted with humane or Pan-Hellenic sentiments. Lessons of gentleness, of home affection, of friendship, of self-denial, he does occasionally teach, and it is here that he shows most of a universal, widely-reaching mind. But such passages stand out as something alien from the general scope of his work. They are like the strawberry-plants which an artist like Conegliano

loves to paint in the foreground of a picture otherwise conventional.

In Aeschylus and Sophocles, the fables in which the people still believed are transfigured by the alchemy of dramatic poetry. Euripides came at a time when this was no longer possible. The myths, whose hold is weakened while their form is varied, become to him the vehicle for a new mode of art, less strong and perfect, although in some directions more genial and penetrative. His permutations and combinations of tragic fable could after all only be carried a little way, while the simplicity which had characterised the art in its great period was inevitably lost.

CHAPTER XIV

FRAGMENTS OF LOST PLAYS

THE fragments of the tragic poets are naturally disappointing. Preserved as they have mostly been for the sake of some general sentiment, or some picturesque expression,—sometimes merely to exemplify the use of an uncommon word, they seldom throw much light upon lost plays, or even illustrate forcibly the characteristics of the writers. Such as they are, however, the reader is here presented with a selection from them. As may be readily imagined, quotations from Euripides are most abundant, both because he was most in vogue in the learned Alexandrian age, and because his love of graphic description and of rhetorical moralising renders him a peculiarly fit subject for the collection of elegant extracts.

The fragments are here numbered as in the edition of Nauck.

AESCHYLUS.

The most considerable fragment of Aeschylus

is a speech from the *Prometheus Unbound* which happens to be quoted by Cicero, but unfortunately not in the Greek. The following is a translation of his translation :—

O Titan breed, co-partners of my blood,
Heaven's offspring, see me tied and bound to a rough
Moorage of rock, as timid sailors bind
Their ship 'mid roaring surf, fearing the dark.
So Cronos' son, great Zeus, hath fixed me here,
Taking Hephaestus for his minister ;
Who with fell craft wedging my sides hath cloven
My joints asunder. By such art transpierced,
I hold this fortress, garrisoned by Furies.
And now there visits me, every third morn,
Zeus' minion flapping sullen wings, and cruelly
With crooked talons, for his dire repast,
Tears me,—till sated with my liver's richness,
He screams for the universe to hear, then soars
Aloft, summing his pens, blithe with my blood.
But when the vital organ hath renewed
Its full-blown form, diminished by his beak,
Again he lights and battens greedily.
So cherish I the guard of my sad suffering,
Who stains me living with perennial pain.
Since foiled, as ye behold, with bonds from Zeus,
I cannot fray this horror from my breast.
Thus ever looking for new misery,
Anxious to die, widowed of what I was,
I long in vain to find an end of ill.
But far from death by Zeus's hest I am driven.
This torment, heaped up by the gathering years,
Ages have made inveterate on my frame,
Whence drops expressed by the too ardent sun
Steep the Caucasian rocks continually. Nauck, fr. 187.

This is also from the "Prometheus Unbound."

186.

The ruddy sea's empurpled floor,
Where, fast by Ocean's thundrous shore,
That fosters Aethiopia's race,
The All-seeing Sun his deathless face
And body with warm drenching laves
Of waters soft, and in mild waves,
Disporting at his journey's close,
Gives his hot coursers glad repose.

(Cp. Eur. *Phaëthon.*)

From the "Heliades," probably treating of the story of Phaëthon.

67.

There on the westward shore
Is moored thy father's bowl, Hephaestus-wrought,
Wherein through billowy paths he passeth o'er
Even to his goal, whence Night's black steeds are brought.

From an "Europa."

94.

'Tis still the War-god's way
To reap the noblest ears o' the human grain.

From the "Myrmidons."

134.

Antilochus, lament me who live on,
More than the dead: my hold of life is gone.

135.

This hath been rumoured in a Libyan tale :—
An eagle with an arrow from the bow
Death-stricken, when he saw by what device
The shaft was winged, spake thus : Herein we are shent
With plumage from our proper pinion lent.

"*Niobe.*"

153.

Tantalus says—

The fields I till extend twelve journeys' space,
To the Berecynthian region, where's the shrine
Of Adrasteia : Ida's flocks and herds
Fill all the air with bleatings, and with noise
Of lowing kine. The plain is rife with cries.

154.

My life hath touched his zenith and now falls
Earthward, and Destiny rounds in mine ear,
"Respect not human fortune overmuch."

156.

Alone of powers divine
Death loves not gifts. None shall prevail with him
By rich drink-offering nor by sacrifice ;
No altar-place, no hymns of praise are his.
Persuasion, to whom other gods give ear,
May ne'er approach him.

157.

Near kin of gods,
Little removed from Zeus, whose altar stands

Sacred to Zeus their father in mid-heaven,
On Ida's height, nor is the blood divine
Yet vanished from their veins.

"*Oedipus.*"

167.

We came upon the three-ways parted road,
Well-marked with wheels, where the dread goddesses
Preside over the meeting of the ways.

"*Sisyphus.*"

226.

To a ghost.

Thou hast no muscle nor blood-furnished veins.

(Cp. *Macbeth.*)

"*Philoctetes.*"

250.

O Death, great healer! scorn me not so far
To bide aloof when summoned. Thou alone
Physician art of wounds immedicable.
A dead man's corpse no sorrow cometh near.

"*Hector's Ransom.*"

259.

Whether you would do kindness to the dead,
Or harm them, 'tis all one. Nor joy nor grief
Finds mortals there. But Nemesis the while
Is greater than we are, and for the dead
Justice exacts return with usury.

"*Orithyia.*"

275.

Boreas loquitur.

For if I see one coal upon the hearth,
Passing within-doors with a wintry swirl,
I'll make the house one cinder, setting fire to it.
As yet my pipings lack of their true note.

From a "Tereus" (?) Attributed to Aeschylus.

297.

The "Hoopoe."

A bold rock-bird, in armour *cap-à-pie*,
When spring appears, he waves the varied wing
Of the white-mottled hawk. His sire and he
Shall differ though derived from one self-womb.
But when young Autumn yellows o'er the grain,
A speckled wing again shall carry him.
And evermore hating these parts he'll fly
To other woods and hills with thickets rough.

"*Ino.*"

305.

Atlas' seven daughters, named Peleiades,
Featherless doves, holding their altered form
Of nightly radiance, weep their father's doom
Who groans beneath the covering vault of Heaven.

Uncertain Plays.[1]

Thetis complains of Apollo, who had sung at her wedding—

340.

He sang of generations fair to be,
Of painless lives and long, and summing all

[1] *I.e.* it is uncertain from what play each of these fragments comes.

My fortunes in the phrase of "God-beloved,"
He cheered my spirit with that health-fraught hymn.
And to my hope Apollo's song divine
Seemed true and pregnant with prophetic power.
But he who voiced it, he who graced that board,
He who so spake, 'tis he hath slain my son.

352.

Nor many wounds upon the breast bring death,
Unless the destined term of life be won,
Nor shall the sitter by his hearth at home
Escape, if destiny but reach the door.

342.

Fear not. The height of woe endures not long.

372.

Where strength and justice join in one endeavour,
What yokefellows can pull more mightily?

383.

A lucky fool is most unbearable.

385.

The man confirms his oath, not oaths the man.

386.

God joins His work with his who labours well.

391.

Where youth is hot and hasty, age is just.

293.

I have learned to speak with favour of the race
Of the Ethiopian soil, where seven-streamed Nile
Rolls o'er the land his breathing water-springs;
The fire-eyed Sun there gleaming on the earth
Melts from the rocks the snow, whence Egypt all
Flushed with the holy rills and blooming o'er
Gives forth Demeter's life-sustaining corn.

Sophocles.

So far as there are any grounds in them for forming a judgment, the student of the fragments of Sophocles is led to believe that in many of his plays the milder pathos of the *Coloneus* and *Philoctetes* prevailed rather than the stern tragic note of the first *Oedipus* or the *Antigone.* The following are some of those in which the human interest is most apparent:—

"*Tereus.*"

521.

An unhappy wife (Procne?) is longing for her former home—

Now, parted thence, I am nothing. Ah! how oft
Have I perceived this of the woman's lot,
What nobodies we are! As girls, 'tis true,
We live sweet lives within our father's home;
For ignorance hath alway store of bliss;
But when we have reached our bloom, and gained some sense,

Then we are cast off, exported, sold away
From our true parents and our fathers' gods
To foreign husbands, if not barbarous,
And to strange homes, or hostile. In a night
Our life is changed. And, once beneath the yoke,
One needs must praise it, and declare, "All's well."

"*Peleus.*"

444.

Old Peleus is led in by a female slave—

Sole handmaid to the son of Aeacus,
I guide his aged steps as if a child's;
For man in age is once again a child.

"*Teucer.*"

516.

Telamon has just heard of his son Ajax's death—

How vain, then, O my son!
How vain was my delight in thy proud fame,
Whilst I supposed thee living! The fell Fury
From her dark shroud beguiled me with sweet lies.

"*Tympanistae.*"

574.

A landsman is uncomfortable at sea—

Ah me! What greater joy than to set foot
On shore, and there beneath a quiet roof
Hear the thick raindrops with half-slumbering ear.

Uncertain Plays.

736.

A father, or paedagogus, is taking young children to school—

Now, then, since all the holy rite is done,
Proceed we, children, to the Muses' haunt,
The halls of sage instruction and grave lore.
Add daily to your knowledge whilst ye may,
While bettering is in season. Every boy
Learns mischief of himself without a fee.
That needs not toil nor tutoring. But what's good,
Even though he find a teacher, he is slow
To acquire, and soon forgets it. Labour, then,
And watch 'gainst idleness, my boys, for fear
Ye should be thought the sons of ignorant men,
Or of a roving, home-neglecting sire.[1]

"*Eriphyle.*"

199.

Depart! you trouble Sleep, the healer of woe.[2]

Uncertain Plays.

858.

This is said of a widowed mother—

With a man's mind she guards her orphaned home.

784.

This, of a perverse temper—

Much need of curbs, ay, and of rudders too.

[1] There is some doubt whether these lines belong to Sophocles or not.

[2] Reading ἀπελθέ, κινεῖς κ.τ.λ.

"Phaedra."

614.

Phaedra entreats her handmaids to keep her secret.

Feel for me, and betray not. Though 'tis hard
For women to keep counsel, yet should women
Help woman to conceal her sex's shame.

Uncertain Plays.

868.

A bereaved person wishes for death—

A. I long to die and go to him!
B. No haste!
Doubt not of winning to thy destined goal.

786.

"Like the snowflake on the river"—

My lot still changes hue. The whirling wheel
Of Providence exalts it and brings down.
So the moon's radiant visage never stays
Two nights together in one form, but first
Peers forth from nothingness with youthful mien,
Then brightening moves and rounding to the full,
Till, just as she attains her noblest show,
She wanes, and dwindles back to nothingness.

753.

One of the Mystae reflects on the happiness of his condition—

Thrice blest is he
Who sees these rites ere he depart. For him
Hades is life, for others naught but woe.

662.

Deep wits and sage philosophers you'll find
Like our friend here, perfect in counselling
The poor unfortunate. But let Fate cross
The jauntiest of them all, and scourge him backward,
Where's his philosophy? 'Tis no more seen.

"*Laocoön.*"

344.

Toil, that is past, is sweet.

"*Thyestes.*"

239.

There is a pleasure even in words that bring
Forgetfulness of present misery.

"*Achaean Assembly.*"

146.

Of memory—

Blest power that holds
The narrow isthmus of our little life
Out of the seas of Time.

"*Achilles' Lovers.*"

154.

"*Sweet and bitter fancy*"—

Love's malady, this torment we desire.
'Twere an apt likeness to compare it thus:
When Frost reigns from the sky, and children seize
On blocks of ice, the newly-felt delight

Is unalloyed at first, but presently,
Thrilled by the smart, they neither will let go
Nor can they hold their treasure without pain.
Even so one passion at one time enforces
Our lover both to do and to forbear.

"*Nauplius.*"

398.

To men unfortunate one night is ten;
But to glad feasters morning comes unsought.[1]

"*Rhizotomi.*"

490.

An invocation—

Helios, lord of light, and thou,
Holy flame on Hecat's brow,
Onward borne as still she moves
Through Olympus and Earth's groves,
Hallowing every triple way
With a consecrating ray;
Crown'd with oak and the divine
Horror of the serpent-twine!

"*Creüsa.*"

328.

'Tis noblest to be righteous; best to live
Free from disease; but pleasantest to have
One's wish, whate'er it be, from day to day.

323.

This is most painful, when the man who might
Mend all brings down the trouble on his head.

[1] Reading εὖ παθόντα δ' ἡμέρα φθάνει.

"*Thyestes.*"

235.

Description of the fabulous Nysaean Mount—

There Bacchus' grape is ripened in a day.
Bright morning sees the tendril and the flower;
By noon green fruit hath formed, and ere the sun
Declines, the clusters redden more and more,
Till toward eve the vintage, fully ripe,
Is cut and gathered, and the vats o'erflow.

"*Tyndareüs.*"

583.

Ne'er count good fortune blessedness until
The man's full life is finished. Little time
Suffices the bad Genius to bring down
Great wealth, through God-sent mutability,
And the dire potency of dangerous gifts.

Uncertain Play.

824.

From one deep fountain sorrow and delight
Both spring. Else why should joy give birth to tears?

"*Hipponoüs.*"

280.

Then hide thou nothing. Time, who sees and hears
All that is done or said, unfoldeth all.

Of contemporaries of Sophocles who may be counted anterior to Euripides the most important are Ion and Neophron.

Here are some of Ion's short fragments, freely rendered :—

"Know thou thyself"—'tis but a little word;
But, for the task, it passes human power.

The dying game-bird,
His body all wounds, his eyeballs bleeding sore,
Still breathes of battle, and with fading strength
Crows faintly, choosing death before disgrace.

The poor huntsman.

A little bird-lime and a hazel rod,
And web of Egypt-netted flaxen thread,
Fettering the wild-fowl, are my means of food.

The foot-race prize.

You shall obtain a gift worth running for—
A cup of fluted wood, untouched by fire,
That Castor's swiftness won from Pelias' hand.

From the "Phoenix."

On shore I praise the lion's open war
More than the hedgehog's wretched craftiness.
When he perceives his mightier coming on,
He rolls himself into a bristly ball,
To teeth and claws alike invulnerable.

Here follows the speech of Neophron's Medea, to which reference was made above in Chap. X.:—

Well, then, O passionate heart, what wilt thou do?
Take thought, ere by thine error thou hast made
The sweetest bonds most bitter. Hapless one,
What impulse carries thee away? Restrain

This hideous valour, this god-hated might!—
Nay, why this whining strain? since I behold
My life deserted and despised of those
Who most should love me. Shall I yield, forsooth,
To soft compunction, when thus deeply wronged?
O passionate heart, be true to thine own cause.
My resolution's taken. Alas, my children,
Go from my sight! A tide of murderous frenzy
O'erflows my mighty spirit. O hands of mine,
For what a deed we are taking arms to-day!
Woe's me for the resolve wherewith I go
To bring to nothingness in one short hour
The fruit of my sore travail and long care!

The following is a fragment from Achaeus of Eretria describing young Hellenes at play:—

Naked they plied their splendid arms, with youth
O'erbrimming, and their brawny shoulders, bright
With fresh-laid oil and rounded perfectness.
While on their chests and on their gleaming feet
Dropped the rich unguent from luxurious homes.

Euripides.

The preservation of more fragments of Euripides than of his two predecessors is due to several causes.

1. His plays were more in vogue in Alexandrian times, and in most subsequent ages have been more popular on account of their literary and rhetorical brilliancy.

2. Not only are quotations from him more frequent and more extensive, but fragments of early copies of his lost works have actually been found. An event which caused no small commotion in the learned world in the year 1821 was the discovery of part of the *Phaëthon* in a palimpsest of the sixth century, forming part of the Claromontane Codex (now at Paris) of the Epistles of St. Paul.

3. In the present generation at least one considerable portion of a play of Euripides (viz. the *Antiopa*) has been found on an Egyptian papyrus of the Alexandrian age.

4. Aristophanes delighted in parodying Euripides, and many rather tantalising echoes have been thus handed down.

Of lost plays of Euripides, those of which the most considerable fragments are preserved are the *Phaëthon*, the *Erechtheus*, the *Antiopa*, and the *Andromeda*.

1. Phaëthon, as the reputed son of Merops, king of the Orient, is about to be married, when his mother reveals to him his true origin. He forms the daring wish to guide his father's chariot for a day. It is reluctantly granted, and while the preparations for the marriage ceremony are in full course his fatal fall is reported.

2. Erechtheus devotes his daughter as a sacrifice to secure victory in the war between Athens

and Eleusis. Mr. Swinburne's splendid treatment of this subject is well known.

3. Amphion and Zethus, sons of Zeus by Antiopa, daughter of Nycteus of Thebes, had grown up as peasants in ignorance of their origin. Zethus takes kindly to useful arts, but Amphion is devoted to the Muse. They are disputing as to the value of their respective occupations, when Antiopa finds them and unveils the truth. She is persecuted by Lycus, who has usurped the kingdom of his brother Nycteus, and by his wife Dircè, who in the guise of a Bacchanal is ranging the hills. The boys seize Dircè and tie her to a furious bull. They then inveigle Lycus and bind him also for death. But at the critical moment Hermes appears, Lycus is spared, and Amphion becomes king of Thebes, which by the music of his lyre he miraculously builds anew.

4. Perseus, on his return from killing the Gorgon, rescues Andromeda from the sea-monster.

Fragments from "Phaëthon."

775.

(*A bridal morning in the land of the Sun.*)

Ch. Lightly moves the morning breeze
And among the dewy trees
Never-wearied Philomel
Sings her dirge for Itys well.
Hark! amid the mountain firs

What's the sound that newly stirs?
'Tis the shepherd's pipe I hear,
And his flock are bleating near.
To the pasture now repair
Colt and filly, horse and mare,
Wakened by the wakening morn.
Now I hear the hunters' horn,
As they ride the forest-way,
Bent the silly deer to slay.
By broad Ocean's rippling rim
Peals the swan her tuneful hymn,
While on his smooth breast afloat
Safely rides the rowing-boat,
And the ship with lordly sail
Glides where freshening winds prevail.

771.

The scene is laid in the land—

Which Helios from behind his fiery team
First in uprising strikes with golden flame:
Called by the dark-hued race of neighbouring men
The Orient, or the stable of the Sun.

757.

A friend offers consolation to the mother of Phaëthon.

Ch. Take thou what comfort I can yield thee, lady.
No mortal lives whom sorrow findeth not.
He buries children: others then are born:
Then he too dies; and men complain that earth
To earth is carried! 'Tis Necessity
Bids life, like ears of grain, be carted home;
That one should go, one come. Why then complain
At that which Nature in her course requires?
Naught that must be hath terror for the wise.

"*Bellerophon.*"

310.

Give way, thou shady leafage, let me pass
Beyond the hollow where fresh waters glide.
I long to see above my head the sky
And know what station radiant Phoebè holds.

"*Erechtheus.*"

362.

Praxithea. I will give my child for death. My reasons for it
Are many. First, no state compares with Athens,
Whose people are not brought from distant lands.
This Earth's true children we! Nations elsewhere,
Shifted upon the chessboard of the world,
Not rooted in the soil, but mortised on,
Or dovetailed, like a clumsy joiner's work,
Are states in name, but really mobs of men.
Then, wherefore have we children, but to shield
Our sacred altars and dear native land?

. . . . .

Had I a son, and fierce invasion's fire
Threatened my city, should I spare to send him,
Fearing his death? Let not my children be
Mere lovely shapes i' the city, but defend her.

. . . . .

The men who fall in battle share a grave
In common and find equal fame. But she,
My child, shall have one single glorious crown,
Dying alone for her whole country's safety.

364.

(*Erechtheus before going to battle gives this charge to his son.*)

Well asked, dear boy! 'Tis time, for now thy wit
Is crescent, and thy mind can register
Thy father's precepts, to advise thee well
And give thee counsel fitted for thy youth—
A precious heirloom for thee, should I die.
First ever keep a gentle heart in thee,
To worship equally the rich and poor
With kind observance and just clemency.
Of lines of conduct offered to thy mind,
Choose one decisively, and leave the other.
Follow not wrongful gain, if thou wouldst dwell
Long time in a safe hall: what comes within
Through wickedness hath no security.
Yet look thou gain. For wealth gives nobleness
And brings great marriages within thy reach.
Since poverty stands ever low in fame,
And reaps neglect, how rich soe'er in wisdom.
The friends that yield not readily in talk
Bind to thee. But to him still bar thy door
Whose vice would pander to thy weak desire.
Seek old and reverend company: but hate
The wits that minister to laughter merely.
Bad pleasures yield but shallow brief delight.
Nor follow, when occasion gives thee power,
My son, base loves among the common people.
That brings the knife, the halter, after it,
To shame the offspring of poor honest men.
Never exalt bad men within the state;
For wickedness enriched or dowered with rule
Grows wanton when unlooked-for luck befalls.

Give me thy hand, dear son; come near! Farewell!
Respect forbids to dwell too much on parting.
It were not manly. So! Once more, farewell!

"*Archelaüs.*"

257.

Think you to overcome the gods in wit,
Supposing Justice far removed from men?
Justice is near at hand, and unperceived
Sees who deserves her chastisement. Thou know'st not
What time with sudden swoop she'll quell the wicked.

"*Cresphontes.*"

462.

Deep fount of wealth, fairest of blessed powers,
Peace, how I murmur at thy long delay.
I burn with jealous fears, lest age o'erwhelm me,
Oppressed with toils, ere I behold thy face,
Thy blooming loveliness, thy revelry,
Thy garlands, thy gay dances, and thy songs.
Come, goddess, to my city! Drive away
From this our home dire Faction's hateful brood,
And frenzied Feud, that loves the sharpened steel.

"*Melanippè.*"

508.

Think you transgressions mount on wings to heaven,
And that some scribe records them in a book,
Where Zeus beholds them and so judges men?
The sky would not suffice for such a scroll,
And time would fail him to o'erlook and punish.
Justice is here at hand, would ye but see.

"*Alopè.*"

112.

Why labour to admonish womankind?
Since those well nurtured, and with greatest care,
Deceive us worse than those we cared not for.

"*Bellerophon.*"

288.

God sides with the greater battalions.

Will any tell me there are gods in heaven?
No gods! No gods! 'Tis but the foolish talk
Of men who let tradition sway their minds.
Consider, not my words, but what ye see.
What spills more lives or reaves more wealth away
Than tyranny? What breaks more oaths across,
Or sacks more cities? Yet the men who do it
Are happier than the quiet harmless souls
That practise piety from day to day.
Small cities honouring the gods aright
Yield to the greater that with impious force
O'erbear them by the number of their spears.

"*Archelaüs.*"

230.

Danaüs, the father of the fifty maids,
Left Egypt's soil and Nilus' healthful stream,
Who fills his current from the southward realm
Of Ethiopia's swarthy race, whene'er
The Sun's hot team, careering through the land,
Melts the pure mountain snow. To Argolis
He came, and founded Inachus' fair town;

And from thenceforward made the custom hold
Pelasgia's stock should have the Danaän name
Through Hellas.

"*Andromeda.*"

512.

One was fortunate,
But God hath hidden what formerly was bright.
Even as the wind prevaileth, human life
And fortune bend and turn.

118.

The maiden is alone with her condoling friends—

Cease, Echo, in thy cave!
Leave me and these dear maids to take our fill
Of weeping.

119.

Share thou my pain, since he who lives in woe
Lightens his load through tearful fellowship.

146.

The future daily affrights us. Still we deem
Ills apprehended worse than present pain.

123.

Perseus arrives:—

Pers. O Heaven! to what barbarian dwelling-place
With winged sandals have I sped, advancing
Through midmost ether my plume-wafted feet?

124.

He sees Andromeda—

How strange! I see a rocky bluff, all round
Washed with sea-foam, and there a maiden form
In native perfectness of chiselled beauty
Wrought cunningly by some unrivalled hand.

131.

"These woes shall serve
For sweet discourses in our time to come."

Sweet after rescue to recall past woe.

139.

He feels that he has been too impetuous—

Love hurries me along—then from my words
Cull forth the better meaning. Love is blind,
And rules the worser moiety of the mind.

135.

The Messenger describes the scene—

The shepherd-folk were flocking to her there,
One fetching her of milk an ivied bowl
To yield her woes relief, and one the cheer
Of grape-juice from the vine.

"Phrixus."

832.

Whoe'er of mortals thinks, day after day,
In doing evil to elude the gods,

His thought is wicked, and conviction waits him.
When Justice finds herself at leisure, then
He'll suffer retribution for his crime.

"*Antigone.*"

176.

Death is to men an end of controversy.
Nought reaches beyond that. Say, who shall wound
The stony precipice and make it smart?
Or who shall touch with shame the senseless dead?

"*Antiopa.*"

207.

Ant. If I and my two sons are God-forgotten,
It is not strange. Of the great world of men
Some must be wretched, and some fortunate.

183.

Each hastens to that work, and gives to that
His most of time, wherein he most excels.

184.

Zethus to Amphion—

A strange pursuit, a muse unprofitable,
Thou wouldst bring in, a friend to idleness,
A lover of wine, neglecting industry.

212.

Repletion waits on all things. I have seen
Fair wives deserted in a passionate mood
For plainness, and the guest, whom feasts have cloyed,
Gladly regaled at an ill-furnished board.

219.

Three virtues thou must practise, O my son—
Honour to Heaven, and to thy parents dear,
And Pan-hellenic laws. Performing this,
Thou still shalt wear the wreath of fair renown.

Additional fragments from the Antiopa.

N.B.—The new fragments of the *Antiopa*[1] are freely rendered from a text restored to a great extent conjecturally (and perhaps rashly) by the present writer. If taxed for this, he can only shelter himself under the authority of Goethe, who writes as follows of his own proceeding in a similar case (Goethe's *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. 1854, vol. xxvi. p. 348):—

Die gewagte Restauration besteht also aus einer Göttling'schen Uebersetzung der von Ritter Hermann mitgetheilten Fragmente, aus den sonstigen Bruchstücken . . . *und aus eigenen eingeschalteten und verbindenden Zeilen.* Diese drei verschiedenen Elemente liess ich ohne weitere Andeutung, wie solches wohl durch Zeichen hätte geschehen können, gesammt abdrucken; der einsichtige Gelehrte unterscheidet sie selbst, die Freunde der Dichtung hingegen würden nur gestört; und da die Aufgabe war, etwas zerstücktes wenigstens einigermassen als ein Ganzes erscheinen zu lassen, so fand ich keinen Beruf, mir meine Arbeit selbst zu zerstücken.

New fragment (restored).[2]

Amphion . . . To kill such women were for me a joy.

[1] Published in *Hermathena*, No. xvii. 1891. [2] See p. 248.

Lycus. 'Twere danger, sure, to let such horror live.
Amph. To work then! For her sons, I know they're dead.
Lyc. Let us address ourselves,—if thou know'st that.
Amph. By going within the humble dwelling-place,
Where he and I, this while, inhabit, sir.
Lyc. What of the strangers? May I speak with them?
Amph. If you but leave your guard without the door.
Lyc. There, I dismiss them. I alone remain.
Amph. We three will manage rightly what ensues.
Lyc. How many are the strangers? Tell me that.
Amph. A handful, and unarmed.
Lyc. (*to his guards.*) Stand ye without
And watch the mountain-ways on every side.
Amph. Meanwhile I will deliver to thy hand
The child of Nycteus.—She shall find, I warrant her . . .

. . . .

Lyc. (*from within*). My henchmen, one and all, to the rescue, ho!
Cho. Shout! Raise the cry! Let the wild notes resound!
Lyc. O City of Cadmus by Asopus' stream!
Cho. The hour arrives.
The day of retribution and of blood.
Justice is slow of gait, but when she comes
She falls unlooked-for on each impious head.
Lyc. Alas! I have no helper. Two will slay me.
Cho. Groan'st thou not also for thy consort slain?
Lyc. Slain is she? That were an unheard-of woe.
Cho. Yea, dragged and torn, tied to a raging bull.
Lyc. By whom? By you? That also I would know.
Amph. Thou shalt know soon, inquiring of the dead.
Lyc. Ye are cruel men. Who is your sire, I wonder?
Amph. Why ask? When thou art dead, thou shalt know all.

. . . .

Hermes (*to Lycus*). When thou shalt bury her,[1] cast her on the pyre,
Gathering the wretched fragments of her form,
Then shed the ashes of her bones consumed
Into the fount of Ares, that the stream
Which passes thence to water all your town
And kindly irrigates the Theban plain
May bear the name of Dircè to all time.
(*To the Cho.*) And ye, when Cadmus' people now are pure,
Go, all of you, beyond Ismenus' stream
Prepare a new and seven-gated town.
(*To Zethus.*) Thou, Zethus, take a weapon of your foes
And mark the city's circuit. Then shalt thou,
(*To Amphion*) Amphion, lyre in hand, lead forth the hymn
Praising the gods, when, lo! a miracle!
The stubborn rocks responding to the strain
Shall come about thee in close order ranged,
Charmed to civility. And when that ground
Affords a solid basement thus prepared,
Your mother's image, curiously wrought,
Thou shalt uplift and place there. Such reward.
Zeus hath appointed and I give to thee,—
Even in the place, where thou didst find, Amphion,
This unexpected boon. Ye shall be called
The twin white colts of Zeus, and evermore
Hold supreme honour 'mong Cadmeian men.
And one of you shall have a Theban wife,
The other a fair bride from Phrygian land,
Tantalus' daughter.—Now with happy speed
Fulfil the part god hath sent forth to-day,
And with good comfort hie the leftward way.
Lyc. What strange surprises lurk in Zeus's will! etc.

[1] Dircè, the wife of Lycus.

Among the successors of Euripides, Chaeremon, the "fleshly" poet, was distinguished as the author of the *Centaur*, a drama in various metres (cp. the Indian Theatre, *e.g. Sakuntalá*). The only considerable fragment of his work, however, is in the regular Iambic measure, and seems to be a description of sleeping Bacchanals. As a piece of word-painting it is remarkable. The subject of the play was Oeneus (father of Tydeus and of Deianira).

> One lay reclined, displaying to the Moon
> Her milk-white bosom loosened from the vest.
> Another's dancing had undone the robe
> From her left flank:—the white complexion there
> Beamed to the eye, set off by darkling shade.
> And one's resplendent arms were bared to view
> As she enclasped her neighbour's yielding neck.
> Another from beneath the parted fold
> Of her rent garment showed a gleaming thigh,
> While on the virgin bloom that smiled therefrom
> Love without Hope had set his maddening seal.
> O'ercome by slumber on soft flowers they fell,
> Crushing the violets' petals purple-grained,
> And crocus, that upon their robes distilled
> A sunlike glory shadowed from the gold.
> And lush amaracus refreshed with dew
> Pillowed their heads on tracts of verdure sweet.

As a specimen of the kind of thing which tragedy became amongst the successors of Euripides, the following fragment of a *Sisyphus*

by Critias, the uncle of Plato and one of the Thirty Tyrants, may perhaps suffice :—

Time was the life of man was void of rule,
Like that of beasts, subserving strength alone,
When no reward was offered to the good
Nor chastisement prescribed for wrongdoers.
Then after that, methinks, mankind ordained
Laws to chastise the bad, that right might rule,
And quell brute insolence. . . .
If any sinned, he found the penalty.
Now, when the laws restrained from open crime
And outward violence, but still men sinned
In secret, then, methinks, some cunning wight,
Of wit more searching than his fellows, found
A fear to terrify whoe'er of men
Did, spake, or thought, even in his secret heart,
A wicked deed, bad word, or foul design.
He brought in godhead to the world, and taught
How deity exists immortally
And blooms for ever and sees all, and knows,
Attends, is conscious, wears a perfect form ;
So that whate'er is spoken in the world
He hears, whate'er is done he witnesseth.
And though in silence you devise the sin,
The gods are 'ware of it, for perfect thought
Is theirs. So reasoning, he introduced
A doctrine welcome to the world, and wrapped
In figments what he held for truth. He said
God dwelt—even there, where feigning such abode
He most might fright his hearers,—in the sky,
The wide circumference, from whence he knew
Men took their terrors and their joys to boot
In this their little life of wretchedness :
Whence lightnings flash and thunders scare mankind,

And sun and stars shed radiance, garnishings
Of Time the decorator, artist good.
Thence shoots the meteor, thence distils the shower.
Such terrors he established all around
The life of mortals, and for that effect
Assigned to God a fitting dwelling-place.
Thus lawlessness by law was tamed and quenched,
And thus, methinks, some man to us unknown
Persuaded mortals to believe in gods.

"The wheel was come full circle" when tragic persons could discourse thus frigidly about religious belief.

CHAPTER XV

ILLUSTRATION: THE STORY OF CAMBYSES ADAPTED FOR A TRAGIC FABLE

In Chapter IV. it has been observed that the Greek tragic poet of the best period was severely restricted in his choice of subjects (1) by the requirements of his audience, who demanded something associated with their national traditions, and (2) by the conditions of his art, which, the more clearly they came to be understood, more imperatively prescribed the selection from the cycle of Hellenic story of those fables which had the *tragic* note in them. If the "best period" could have been prolonged, if other poets of equal originality had arisen to reawaken and satisfy the taste which had been cultivated by Sophocles, it is probable that, as the narrowness of local patriotism was modified, many of the life-histories, which Herodotus and other Greek historians had so vividly told, might have been dramatised with effect.

It may therefore not be wholly extravagant if, as an illustration of the views advanced in the preceding pages, I attempt to show how the story of Cambyses, for example, could be arranged for treatment in an Athenian drama. The reader must forget Falstaff's burlesque allusion to "King Cambyses' vein," as well as Thomas Preston's "Lamentable tragedy, mixed full of pleasant mirth, containing the life of Cambyses, King of Persia," except in so far as these mock-heroics imply a sense of what is really tragic in the old tale.

There is one great preliminary difficulty to be overcome before the Cambyses of history (for whom see *Dict. of Class. Biography*) can be transformed into a hero of tragedy. The Cambyses of Herodotus is passionate enough, and abundantly unfortunate, but sadly wanting in nobility. He is altogether too lawless, too utterly self-willed, too barbarous to enlist our sympathy. If he is to interest a Greek audience, the worst features of his life must be suppressed, and his excesses must be attributed to the perversion of high motives. Some colour for this is afforded by his dying speech (Her. iii. 65), in which he shows a real solicitude for the Persian name. With this proviso the argument might run somewhat as follows:—

"Cambyses, son of Cyrus the Great, having

subdued Egypt, resolves to extend the Persian empire and religion over the whole of Africa. He sends armies against Carthage and against the Ammonian oasis, and himself marches into Ethiopia. But one army is baffled, another overwhelmed, and his own troops are worn by famine and compelled to return. His fiery patriotism and fanatical zeal are only increased by this, and while the Egyptians are in high festival on the apparition of Apis, he insults their god. As he is glorying in this achievement and boasting high things, he is warned in a dream that the kingdom is to be taken from him and given to Smerdis. This leads to his crowning guilt—the assassination of his brother Smerdis by his command. No sooner is this accomplished than the news arrives that Smerdis—the Magian, as it proves—has usurped the throne. Cambyses hastily mounts his charger to return, but is accidentally wounded by his own sword, and in a dying state gives the Persian nobles around him his last commands."

The character of Cambyses would be contrasted on the one hand with that of his sister, who might be named Parysatis, and on the other with that of his confidential minister, Praxaspes. The aged Croesus would supply the place of Teiresias, as a kind of seer. The *dramatis personae* are then as follows :—

PARYSATIS, sister of Cambyses.
PRAXASPES, his prime minister.
A MESSENGER.
CHORUS of Persian elders.
CAMBYSES, King of Persia.
HERALD.
SECOND MESSENGER.

The groundwork being so far prepared, we may attempt the following *scenario* :—

Prologos.

PARYSATIS. PRAXASPES.

Parysatis confides to Praxaspes her anxiety for her two brothers, (1) for Cambyses, who is on the verge of madness, (2) for Smerdis, who is left in charge at home. Cambyses is returned from Ethiopia disappointed, weakened, overstrained. What if the other expeditions to Carthage and to Ammon have likewise failed? Will he not pass all bounds? Praxaspes also owns to his anxiety (1) for Persia, (2) for his own children, (3) for his lord Cambyses. Not only the king's disappointment is to be feared, but his zeal for Persia and for Ormuzd. Has Parysatis heard that bull Apis, the epiphany of Osiris, has just appeared?

The Messenger now arrives and reports the failure of the armies.

Parodos.

CHORUS.

The Egyptians are slaves to Persia. Yet they rejoice. Wherefore? Because three Persian hosts have been destroyed? Think of the millions yet in reserve! Some friends are lost, but many more remain. But they rejoice with a religious joy. Their gods, perchance, have inflicted on us these wounds. Yet let us not insult the people who are in festival, but honour King *Nomos*, though in a strange land. The divine has many forms. Who can tell if Apis be not Ormuzd in disguise?

First Epeisodion.

CAMBYSES. CHORUS.

Cambyses enters with a blood-stained sword, and recounts his feat upon the bull Apis. He vents his wrath on the Egyptian gods, who have sent famine and the sandstorm on the armies of Persia. No gods of flesh and blood shall triumph over Ormuzd and the seed of Cyrus.

First Stasimon.

CHORUS.

(1) Will Cambyses, our lord, escape from heavenly wrath? He is already inclined to frenzy. The seed of the Achaemenidae hath still been rash.

(2) This deed is terrible. Dreadful was the

famine in the forest: first they lived on the insane root, then ate each other. Dreadful the sand-whirlwind that overwhelmed the fifty thousand. But more dreadful is the guilt now incurred, the anger of a people whose religion is outraged, perchance also the fury of their gods.

Second Epeisodion.

CAMBYSES. PRAXASPES.

Cambyses tells his dream: how Smerdis was sitting in his throne, his head reaching the sky. But Cambyses will not brook that another should sit in the seat of Cyrus. Either he, Cambyses, must exalt the greatness of the Persian name, or the universe may go to wreck.

Praxaspes replies submissively, deprecating evil. Cambyses gives him sealed orders, and *exit.*

Praxaspes claims the sympathy of the Chorus. Should aught untoward result from this commission, let the blame rest on him whose will cannot be resisted.

Second Stasimon.

CHORUS.

(1) The Chorus find the situation increasingly grave. This may only be the beginning of troubles. The moods of princes are to be feared.

(2) Dreams give a wonderful impression of reality, but are not always true. Cambyses'

dream may have been sent by a deceiving god, perhaps by Osiris. The event must show.

Third Epeisodion.

PARYSATIS—CAMBYSES—PRAXASPES—HERALD.

After a scene between Parysatis and Cambyses, in which the king grows more and more violent, Praxaspes returns. He is welcomed and goes in with Cambyses to the palace. Parysatis remains and, in lyrics from the stage (*Commation*), complains to the Chorus of the misery of her lot. They sympathise with her. Praxaspes comes forth again, and after securing from all present a promise of secrecy, confesses the truth —Smerdis, son of Cyrus and brother of Cambyses, is no more. Parysatis goes silently within.

The Herald then arrives, and Cambyses is called forth. The Herald reports that Smerdis is on the throne. Cambyses rages at Praxaspes, who insists that the king's order was obeyed. Cambyses orders the son of Praxaspes to be arrested as a hostage. Praxaspes himself is led forth by the guards. Cambyses and the Herald go within.

Third Stasimon.

CHORUS.

(1) The Chorus give utterance to their consternation. They recall the greatness of Cyrus, his wisdom, his temperance, his personal bravery.

Yet how sad his end! They remember also the youthful promise of Cambyses, his generous ardour, his accomplishments, his feats of strength.

(2) Now, what is the condition of the royal home? Disorder, fratricidal feud, and usurpation —by a brother or a stranger?

(3) Thus it comes to pass when men mount high in pride. They fall down low.

(4) Destruction of three armies, the outrage of sanctities, madness, and loss of empire (here the least of ills) are together fallen on Cambyses.

Fourth Epeisodion.

CROESUS. CAMBYSES.

Croesus enters, supported by a slave, and calls forth Cambyses. He soothes his rage and prevails on him to cross-examine the Herald. In the course of this dialogue a light breaks on the leader of the Chorus. "Smerdis" is no other than the Magian whom Cambyses left in charge of his treasures. The king is suddenly convinced of this: orders the release of Praxaspes (whose son is unfortunately already slain), and calls to horse. Then *exeunt.*

Hyporchema.

CHORUS.

The Chorus hereupon break out in an excited strain of mingled grief and hopefulness—appealing

to the Sun and all the gods not to allow the Empire to pass away from the Achaemenian name.

Fifth Epeisodion.

The Second Messenger enters in haste and reports that in mounting his horse Cambyses has accidentally been wounded by his own sword in the very place where he had wounded the bull. The narrative ended, Cambyses is brought in on a litter, accompanied by Croesus, who speaks of his own old sorrows and attempts to console the dying king. The suicide of Parysatis is reported and her corpse disclosed. Cambyses then addresses the Chorus, lamenting his own errors and exhorting his friends to vindicate the Persian name. He blames his flatterers, who when they could find no law to justify his acts, invented the other law, "The king can do his will."

The *Commos* follows, in which Cambyses, Croesus, and the Chorus lament antiphonally together.

Exodus and Exodion.

As he is carried into the palace to die, the leader of the Chorus moralises the situation in a few impressive lines.

A romantic drama of the milder Euripidean type, or, as Dryden phrases it, one of "that

inferior sort of tragedies which end with a prosperous event," might have been founded on the story of Democedes (see *Dict. of Class. Biography*).

The opening scene would introduce him in the dungeon, conversing with the soothsayer, his fellow-captive, who would prophesy good. A Chorus of Persians might admire the Greek physician while remaining loyal to Darius, whose sprained ankle would be the first complication, leading to the order for the physician's release. Then would follow the enrichment of Democedes, told by a messenger ; his longing for home (here the presence of the Chorus would be a difficulty) ; the delicacy of his relations with Atossa ; his interview with Darius, whom he deceives by refusing to unfurnish his house in Susa. His departure would be the crisis of the play ; and the sequel, including his voyage and the parting message, "I am married to Milo's daughter," would again be reported in Euripidean narrative by the captain of the Persian crew. If Crotona had had a native drama, and if Democedes had attained to heroic honours there, such a play might have been not impossible.

It would be wearisome to follow up these hints, else it might be shown how plays of the romantic order might have been founded on the

history of Dorieus, and of his friend Philip of Crotona.

The motive for touching so far upon a doubtful theme has been (1) to illustrate some points of tragic method, and (2) to accentuate the inevitable limitations to which tragic poetry in Greece had to conform.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW TO ENJOY GREEK TRAGEDY[1]

(A Lecture)

DION CHRYSOSTOMUS, the rhetorician and Professor of Literature, who flourished towards the end of the first century A.D., tells in one of his lucubrations how he has spent a day of leisure in reading to himself for pastime three great dramas on the same subject—Philoctetes at Lemnos—by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. He remarks that he has thus been enabled, at small cost, to be his own choragus, his own chorus (or acting company), and his own judge. He possessed some advantages which are denied to the modern student. Classical Greek, if not his native language (he was born in Bithynia), was at least a living language to him, and he had a much larger dramatic repertory—so far as the Greek theatre is in question—at his command. But

[1] Books to consult: Papers by Fleeming Jenkin, ed. R. L. Stevenson, vol. i.; Jebb's *Oed. Rex*, Appendix on Harvard performance; *Soph. in Eng. Verse*, Prefatory Note.

there is no reason why an analogous enjoyment should not be in some measure attainable by English students, or even by the "English reader."

Under the present heading I propose to consider—

1. Translations in prose and verse (rhymed or unrhymed).

2. Dramatic reading.

3. Representation on the stage in Greek or English.

The direct knowledge of the Greek tragedians was but little promoted in England by the *furore* for classical translation otherwise so prevalent at the Revival of Learning. Gascoigne's *Jocasta*, an adaptation of the *Phoenissae* of Euripides, is the only Greek play that is known to have appeared so early in an English dress. The *Electra* and *Antigone* of Sophocles had been translated and imitated in France and Italy, but do not appear to have been rendered into our language even at second-hand. English students of the drama contented themselves with Seneca. The *Electra* of Sophocles was rendered into Dutch by J. Vondel about 1640. And, possibly suggested by this, the *Electra* of Christopher Wase was printed at the Hague in 1649. It is a strange production, dedicated to the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I., who by implication is compared to

Electra, her brother to Orestes, and the late martyred sovereign to Agamemnon. The rendering, which follows Sophocles pretty closely, is in rhymed heroic verse throughout. About a century afterwards, Lewis Theobald made a more serious attempt, and rendered four plays of Sophocles into very tolerable blank verse; the choral portions, however, as in Browning's rendering of the *Alcestis*, being given in the same metre.

Francklin's *Sophocles* (1759) was the first complete translation of a Greek tragic poet. It was perhaps suggested by the French version of Brumoy, contained in his *Theatre of the Ancients* (1749). Potter's *Aeschylus* followed next; and the same diligent Greek Professor also gave a complete translation in verse first of Euripides and finally of Sophocles. The choral odes are in the manner of Gray.

Since that time translations, both in prose and verse, of all the tragic poets have been not infrequent, and some favourite plays, such as the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the *Agamemnon*, the *Antigone*, and the *Prometheus*, have been attempted oftentimes.

Two questions with regard to the translation of ancient poetry have been much disputed. First, as between verse and prose; and secondly, if verse is preferable, whether the metre of the

original should not be closely imitated. A further question, but one of minor import, is whether lyrics should be rhymed or not.

1. The alternative of verse or prose does not bear in my opinion to be put quite simply. For, first of all, it should be considered with reference to the language into which the translation is to be made. French prose is one thing, English prose another. In the next place, the kind of poetry to be translated must be taken into the account. A different method may be right for epic, lyric, idyllic, and dramatic poetry. The *Odyssey*, which is a narrative poem, has been rendered into English prose more perfectly than has been hitherto done in verse. But a heroic *drama* in prose, though never so well written, would seem unnatural and tame to English readers. If the drama is to be rendered as a drama, that is to say, in a form in which it might be put upon the stage, any other medium than blank verse for the dialogue is hardly admissible.

The more difficult point of the choral odes of course remains. If what is called the level portion is in verse, the part characterised by lyrical exaltation cannot be in prose; but should it be in rhyme? I think so. Because (1) unrhymed lyrics have hitherto not prospered in our tongue. Matthew Arnold's, which are the best of this century, bear too much evidence

of a study of German poets, who in this, as in their hexameters and pentameters, worked with a freer hand. Blake's unrhymed verses at an earlier period were *sui generis*, and so peculiar a style can hardly be adopted for purposes of translation. (2) The most exquisite unrhymed lyrics conceivable (*e.g.* Collins' *Ode to Evening*) will always make their appeal in England to the *few*. Translations are not for the few, but for the many, and must in any case be unsatisfying to scholars. In the management of the rhymes, of course, one who is a scholar and has an ear will seek to adapt his rhythm to the feeling of each passage. But this does not mean a mechanical imitation of ancient rhythms. This again may be an attempt suited to the German genius, but not to our language, which has its own native principles, its own means of producing metrical effects. Foreign models can no longer be so fruitfully adopted as in the time of Spenser. And the license for such experiments can be more readily accorded to the original poet than to the translator, whose safest course is to run in some familiar groove. Carducci, in his neo-paganism, may mould the Italian into an ingenious likeness of its Latin prototype; it does not follow that in transfusing Greek thought and feeling into our barbarous tongue we are to carry with us the Greek *mould* as well as the metal. Clever people will still be found to say

that they prefer the baldest literal version to such recasting. Let them munch their *Bohn* by all means if they find this the readiest way to get the marrow. The translator has a more ordinary set of readers in his eye. He desires to hit the average apprehension, to which the language of Bohn does not convey those "unheard harmonies" which the intuition of genius finds there. And if the question is between a real translation in prose and one in verse, let it not be forgotten that the prose translator also must recast much. He must study rhythm and round his periods. That is not consistent with employing literalness, that bald-pated slave. Dr. John Carlyle once told me that he translated Dante into prose "because no tune was better than the wrong tune." There is something in that, and his translation is admirable as a companion to the text. The fact is that there are two kinds of translation, having different aims, the one an aid to reading the original, the other for English readers. But the prose translator also, if his version is to be able to *go alone*, must have a "tune" of some kind.

The literary *précieux*, or *exquisite*, has many forms, and they all combine to scout the humble translator. Even our "gutter" journalism has its Mascarille. Besides these, the translator has two other persistent enemies, the pedant and the tyro-scholar. The pedant must, I fear, be left to him-

self. His case is hopeless. That worst form of ignorance, conceit of knowledge, surrounds him like the nine-enfolded Styx, a multiplex river of hate. If Dryden could make no impression on the Ogilbys of his day, there is small hope for his feebler successors.[1] Yet to propitiate this grave and reverend seignior, before passing onward, let us make our bow to him and say that the translator will be most grateful for any light, however dry, so it be true and clear. For his desire is to be faithful as well as free.

Of the tyro it would be wrong to despair, for, as Protagoras in Plato says of the sons of Pericles, "he is yet young." In the flush of natural exultation at being able to construe a speech of Prometheus or a choral ode of the *Oedipus*, perhaps to say it off by heart in barbarous tones, he has a feeling of natural superiority to his cousin or his aunt, who seems to enjoy what has neither the usefulness of a *crib* nor the grandeur of the Greek original. He is young, as has been said, and therefore does not know that if a drama is to be enjoyed it must be enjoyed as a whole, and it cannot be so enjoyed unless the whole of it can be at one time presented to the mind. In spelling out his single play, some forty lines a lesson or so, with the help of

[1] Dryden's critical *dicta* on this subject are altogether admirable. If only he had always *done* as he has *said*!

Grammar and Lexicon—the less help he has from the *crib* the better,—he is taking the sure road towards an ultimate comprehension of the poet's mind, much more intimate and thorough than is attainable through translations only. It may be that his contempt for all translations is one of those preservative instincts which are common to ingenuous youth. But do not let him spoil other people's enjoyment by spouting Ὦ Διὸς αἰθήρ, etc., in tones that would be unintelligible (not to say excruciating) to an ancient Greek, and flaunting the truism that the lines are untranslatable. Rather he should be advised, in some "season of calm weather," when the stress of examinations is temporarily removed and he is away from the originals, to take up a verse translation and glance over it. That *coup d'œil* may be of service to him when he returns to study.

Translations from Greek classics, then, are (1) for the increasing number of educated persons who have no Greek, and also (2) for those, whom the establishment of the modern side in schools probably renders a decreasing number, who began Greek in boyhood, but have dropped it under the stress of business in after life. Can they hope to get enjoyment in reading to themselves some fairly executed translation of a Greek tragedy? That partly depends upon another question, Do they enjoy reading plays in English at all? There is

nothing in which intelligent persons differ more than in this. The reason is that in a printed play there are fewer aids to the imagination than in other forms of fiction. Characters, looks, gestures, etc., are not described. One has to take the trouble of imagining them. To get the full enjoyment out of a play of Shakespeare, for example, when read "in the closet" requires either more than average gifts or a special training. One main object of the present work has been to place my readers, if I could, in a more advantageous position for appreciating, if not at first hand then through translations, the master-pieces of Greek dramatic art, to enter more fully into their significance, and to understand how the several parts or elements bear upon each other.

Another aid which is not to be despised is dramatic reading. Supposing the translation to be one that will bear the test (and it is the most crucial test conceivable), then if it is read aloud by one who has studied the particular drama and can read, the true effect will be carried home to many people's hearts to whom the printed page would have appealed in vain. Or again, if several persons combined, as at a Shakespeare reading, to distribute the parts amongst them, dividing the Chorus between four or five, and after sufficient study and rehearsal delivered themselves to an

audience—supposing the reading to be equally good,—the effect would be more complete. The only difficulty here is that the art of reading aloud, and especially of dramatic reading, is so little cultivated ; else this method would have some advantages over what at first sight seems the more complete and perfect one of representation on the stage. This is well worth attempting, but is surrounded with difficulties.

Before enumerating these, it may be well to review the history of such attempts in England and elsewhere. Many instances of such revival have been, no doubt, forgotten. For example, it is more than probable, considering the character of the age, that the *Antigone* of Alemanni and that of Rotrou, the *Electra* of De Baïf, of Vondel, or of Christopher Wase, were really performed in Italy, France, and the Low Countries respectively. The *Oedipus* of Dryden and Lee (1679) is hardly more removed from Sophocles than Dryden's *All for Love* is from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.* The model suffers in both cases, but it is still the model. L. Theobald's much closer rendering of the *Electra* of Sophocles was certainly acted in London about the middle of last century.[1] Such performances, both in public and private, have in the present

[1] See the *Dramatic Miscellany* of 1760.

century had considerable vogue in Germany, where the appreciative criticism of Lessing had long since helped to create a taste for them. They received a great stimulus in the year 1841 when Mendelssohn was the royal *Capellmeister* at Berlin,[1] and wrote music for the *Antigone* and *Oedipus Coloneus* in Donner's translation, which followed closely the metres of the original. The choral parts were specially revised for the occasion by August Boeckh.[2] This part-dramatical, part-musical production was transferred to England, Scotland, and Ireland in 1845, and was rendered memorable by the fact that Helen Faucit, now Lady Martin, acted the part of *Antigone* —the play having been translated, with omissions, by Mr. Bartholomew. Similar performances, in which, however, Mendelssohn's music has been the principal attraction, have taken place repeatedly in recent years at the Crystal Palace.

Glancing back to an earlier period, we find English schoolmasters, such as Parr and Valpy, encouraging their pupils to recite the original dialogue of some Greek tragedies in costume. One of Dr. Parr's audience when the *Trachiniae* was thus presented at Stanmore (1772) was Sir William Jones, the famous Oriental scholar;[3]

[1] See Grove's *Dict. of Music*, vol. ii.

[2] It is observable that A. Boeckh's *Antigone* in Greek and German was published in 1842.

[3] Monk's *Life of Dr. Parr*.

and one of Dr. Valpy's auditors at Reading (1810) was young Talfourd, afterwards Serjeant Talfourd, who, in the Dedication to his tragedy of *Ion*, gracefully acknowledges the stimulus he had then received.

The countrymen of Corneille and Racine have not been insensible to the acting possibilities of Greek tragedy. An adaptation of the *Antigone* by Messieurs Auguste Vacquerie and Paul Meurice was acted in Paris at the Odéon (as I have been told by Mr. Swinburne) in May 1844. And a rhymed version of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, by the late M. La Croix, has been repeatedly mounted at the Théâtre Français (first in 1858), no less distinguished actors than Geoffroy, in 1861, and Mounet-Sully, in 1881-1890, having assumed the title-rôle; and at least one considerable actress Mdlle. Lerou, is known first to have made her mark in the part of Jocasta. *Les Erinnyes*, a successful play of Leconte de Lisle, repeatedly produced at the Odéon, is in effect a spirited rhymed version of the most dramatic parts of the *Agamemnon* and the *Choëphoroe*.

The year 1873 saw the unconscious beginning of a series of similar attempts in Great Britain. The late Professor Fleeming Jenkin,[1] whose private stage in his house at 3 Great Stuart Street was for

[1] *Papers and Memoir of Fleeming Jenkin*, by R. L. Stevenson; *Memoir*, pp. 126, 127.

many years a centre of intellectual life in Edinburgh, produced in that year, with the help of his dramatic friends, the principal scenes from the *Frogs* of Aristophanes in Hookham Frere's translation.[1] On the same stage, in the spring of 1877, under Professor Jenkin's management, a recently-published version of the *Trachiniae* of Sophocles was performed, the part of Deianira being played by Mrs. Fleeming Jenkin. This gave so much pleasure that it was again brought out with good effect in the Town Hall, St. Andrews, in the autumn of the same year. The Professor's well-known dramatic enthusiasm warmed more over this than any of his previous undertakings, and on the appearance of Browning's *Agamemnon* he wrote an article in which the glow of that enthusiasm was clearly reflected. This was published in the *Edinburgh Review* for 1878, and has since been reprinted amongst his collected papers.[2] In concluding it he says: "One object of this article has been to draw attention to the extraordinary merits of some Greek plays as dramas fit for representation on the stage."

He had a practical aim in view when he wrote thus of the *Agamemnon*, and less than two years subsequently, after long and anxious preparation, some six hundred of his friends witnessed on the

[1] *Papers and Memoir of Fleeming Jenkin*, by R. L. Stevenson vol. i. pp. 35-44.

[2] Vol. i. pp. 3-34.

stage in Great Stuart Street a performance of the *Agamemnon* in English. This was in May 1880. By this time the seed had been cast abroad, and other causes had conspired to fructify it. In June of the same year the *Agamemnon*, in the Greek, was performed by Oxford undergraduates in the hall of Balliol College before an audience which included many persons of literary eminence. It took all present by surprise, and produced a remarkable effect. The light had now been set upon a hill, and, like the pine-blaze on Mount Athos, it shot far over land and sea, to London, to Cambridge, where at least six plays have been performed in the Greek, to Bradfield,[1] to Harvard, U.S.A., to Toronto in Canada, and subsequently to the Cape of Good Hope, where, however, the performance in 1889 of the *Electra* of Sophocles in English was the direct outcome of the impression produced by the representation of the *Deianira* at St. Andrews in 1877.[2]

In the spring of 1890 the Students' Shakespearian and Dramatic Society of St. Andrews University performed the *Ajax* of Sophocles in English. The performance was witnessed and enjoyed by about nine hundred persons from St. Andrews, Dundee, and elsewhere. An appreciative notice appeared in the *Academy* of 8th March 1890.

[1] In the neighbourhood of Reading; see above.

[2] See the *Cape Argus* for 30th Sept. 1889.

Of the representations which are here recorded, those at Oxford and Cambridge, at Bradfield, at the Queen's College, London, at Harvard, and at Toronto, besides many scholastic performances in Germany, have been in Greek. Those in French and German theatres, the performances of the *Antigone*, etc., in England in 1845 and subsequently; those in 1877-1890 in Edinburgh, St. Andrews, and Cape Town, have been in the language understanded of the people. The same method was followed, in part, by those who got up the Tale of Orestes in London under the management of Professor Warr, and by Lady Maidstone when she played the *Antigone* in St. George's Hall in 1890, taking for the purpose Mr. Whitelaw's translation.[1]

There is thus some experience to go upon in estimating the comparative merits and demerits of such attempts in Greek, and in the language of the country in which the play is acted. Assuming an audience who are all well acquainted with the play, and who are agreed in accepting the same mode of pronouncing Greek; assuming, further, that a young scholar has been found with sufficient dramatic genius to act the part of Ajax or of Oedipus, there are of course great advantages

[1] Some reference should be made in this connection to the production in Hengler's Circus of plays after the Greek model by Mr. Todhunter.

on the side of a performance in the original. The poet's actual words are given with rightness of intention and in tones which to the hearers are not barbarous. The dresses and other properties, founded on antiquarian research, help to sustain a certain species of illusion, especially when, as at Bradfield, a model of the Dionysiac theatre can be provided [1] in the open air, and the day is fine. But how rare is such a combination of propitious circumstances! Can an audience even of five hundred people be gathered anywhere in Great Britain to whom every syllable of a Greek play, if well acted and declaimed, goes home with absolute fulness of effect? or could five hundred of the best scholars of the country be assembled by every one of whom the same pronunciation and accentuation of the Greek would be without misgiving accepted as real? The ancient rhythms, especially the anapaestic, afford, no doubt, an excellent opportunity for the musical composer; but is there not a danger here that the music will prove more interesting than the action, and that antique simplicity will give way to the genius of modern art? The music indeed will be appreciated and understood by many who do not follow the words, but this is not to revive Greek tragedy. Sir Walter Scott says in his *Journal* for 6th April

[1] But here the Dörpfeld controversy, referred to in Chap. VIII., constitutes a fresh difficulty.

1829—"William Forbes sang in the evening with a feeling and taste indescribably fine; but as he had no Scottish or English songs, my ears were not much gratified. I have no sense beyond Mungo: '*What signify me hear if me no understand.*'"[1]

"Oh, but," it will be said, "we have the translation in our hands or on our knees, just as at the Italian Opera, or at the French play." Or, "We have read it up beforehand, and we have a fair general notion what it is all about." Well, of course, that is the only resource left to you. I must own that I have recourse to it myself in the case of foreign languages which I have not fully acquired conversationally,—except when, as in the case of Shakespeare or Sophocles, I happen to know the original play pretty well by heart.

[1] Aristotle defines language as φωνὴ σημαντική—"sound conveying sense"; and he also truly says that dramatic effects are given through language (see Chap. I.) And compare the following dialogue in Fletcher's *Elder Brother*:—

Brisac. . . . I'm sure you've read all Aristotle.
Miramont. Faith, no:
But I believe; I have a learned faith, sir,
And that's it makes a gentleman of my sort.
Though I can speak no Greek, I love the sound on't;
It goes so thundering as it conjured devils:
Charles speaks it loftily, and, if thou wert a man,
Or hadst but ever heard of Homer's Iliads,
Hesiod, and the Greek poets, thou wouldst run mad,
And hang thyself for joy thou hadst such a gentleman
To be thy son. Oh, he has read such things
To me!
Bri. And do you understand 'em, brother?
Mir. I tell thee, no; that's not material; the sound's
Sufficient to confirm an honest man.

Even in that case, I do not profess to receive from Salvini or from Mounet-Sully the entire benefit of their highly finished declamation. As to having the play before me either in a translation or in the original while it is being performed, I am not equal to the acrobatic feat of being auditor, reader, and spectator all in one. Suppose the play to be *Otello*, and that I have forgotten the Italian word for handkerchief, or (what is equally possible) that I know it when I see it in print, but not when I hear it spoken. As I observe the rising excitement of the scene I either look down at the libretto and lose one of the most important bits of the acting, or fail to do so and miss its full significance. The culminating passion of Shakespeare's *Othello* becomes "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Or I am listening to Mounet-Sully's narrative to Jocasta with a general comprehension of his drift, when suddenly his voice softens and an unexpected pathos strikes me through the ear. For the moment I am at a loss, for in listening to the unfamiliar language, I have dropped the thread. Only on looking down upon the book do I discover that the actor has made a good point by marking the strong filial affection of Oedipus towards his supposed father, Polybus. My judgment approves of this, but it is too late

really to *enjoy* it. For the effect of declamation on the stage—"the action suited to the word, the word to the action"—must be instantaneous, or it is null and nothing worth. The true object of stage revival is dramatic *interpretation.* Antiquarian reproduction (as of Nineveh or Luxor in the Crystal Palace), opportunities of musical effect, the imaginative illusion of hearing the actual words in the original language (as if language were any longer language when it conveys no meaning), these are after all side issues.

As an academical exercise, the effect of which (apart from the benefit to the performers) may be to scholars most enjoyable and even beautiful, the production of Greek plays in Greek deserves all encouragement and praise. And the mere sketch in outline of a Greek tragedy is so instinct with life that many persons who are ignorant of Greek receive much unlooked for enjoyment from such representation. But as a mode of *interpretation*, while it has its advantages, it must be acknowledged, for the reasons stated, to be incomplete. To hear the Psalms chanted in Hebrew once or twice is an impressive experience. But for a mixed congregation in Great Britain the Authorised, or still better, the Prayer-Book Version—in Scotland even a "gude hard Psalm" in the old Metrical Version—has surely more of a devotional effect. If our Reformers had not felt

thus, the English language would be poorer than it is to-day.

The analogy of the French play, etc., does not run upon all fours. If a company or "thiasus" of Periclean, or even of Alexandrian Greeks, could be brought over to London from the Elysian Fields or "wheresome'er they are," and were found willing to accommodate themselves to the dimensions of Her Majesty's Theatre or of Drury Lane, and to perform by gas-light (or electric light), that "novelty" would be well worth a visit, if only to solve the moot question of the pronunciation of Greek. Then, as in seeing the French plays, we should at least be listening to perfect artists declaiming in their own native tongue. But as that is "no possible," as Lamb's Scotchman said, "because they are deid," it remains for us to consider the advantages and disadvantages of a performance in the language of the country in which the play is to be presented. This plan has been followed for thirty years in France, and for fifty in Germany, where the Donner-Boeckh version of the *Antigone* has been repeatedly mounted on the public stage. Some difference of spirit is noticeable between the two attempts. The German rendering is one of the finest fruits of German scholarship, and it follows closely the metrical structure of the original, to which in the choral parts, Mendelssohn's music

was originally adapted. I have no doubt that great German actors and actresses have nobly given the parts of Creon, Haemon, Antigone, and Eurydice. But for some reason the purely dramatic aspect of the production has been less celebrated out of Germany than the musical numbers have. In the French production of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, on the other hand, the Chorus is reduced to a position which, except where the Chorus-leader takes part in the dialogue, is unessential and merely ornamental. While the Chorus-leader accordingly remains a Theban Elder, the *strophes* and *antistrophes* of the principal odes are musically declaimed by two young *débutantes*, who mount on a sort of pedestal when they recite. This is a serious drawback. But it does not prevent the play, as a play, from producing a tremendous impression. The dialogue is in rhymed Alexandrines, according to the native tradition for an heroic play in France. But the rendering is faithful, and almost line for line. On both occasions when I saw the play, the attendance, especially of men in the *parterre*, was full and large; and it needs hardly to be said that it was not an audience of scholars. There was nothing, always excepting the *débutantes*, to jar upon a student of the Greek, but I suspect that few thought much whether Oedipus was a Theban or a Frenchman. What we had before us was the

man, the affectionate, public-spirited man, who became the victim of those cruel sorrows, and with noble intentions incurred such dreadful guilt. The silence at critical moments was more striking even than the applause. As I came away, I asked myself, Why can we not have the like of this in England? And the only answer I could return to myself was that we have at present no school of tragic acting in our country. We are fast losing even the tradition. We have had to import even our Othello and our Lear. In burlesque, in cup-and-saucer comedy, even in sentimental drama of a realistic type, we have actors whom I dare say it would be hard to beat. Heroic or ideal drama we have none, perhaps do not want to have it. It is not merely that we have no Oedipus, but who is to act the Priest, or Teiresias, or the Theban Shepherd? Who is to declaim the narrative of the Exangelus? All this was worthily done at the Théâtre Français. And if it were possible, under the conditions of theatrical management in Great Britain, to conduct a similar enterprise with equal skill, it would, I think, be felt more widely and generally than it is felt to-day that the dramatic and the purely human elements in Sophocles (for example) are imperishable.

The management of the Chorus is, I must own, attended with great difficulties, and these are

greater for obvious reasons in the case of the earlier plays, such as the Oresteia or the *Antigone*, than in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. But even were the difficulty insuperable, it might be evaded, as at the Théâtre Français—only avoiding the solecism of substituting women for men,—and much would still have been gained. Half a loaf is better than no bread, and in Sophocles the dramatic portion, *i.e.* the dialogue, is more than half. But I do not see why the difficulty need be altogether insuperable. Were the task to prove attractive to some composer, gifted with such self-restraint and power of dramatic adaptation as Verdi showed in his opera of *Otello*, the problem would be solved. The number of the Chorus is an unessential point, and might be reduced according to the size of the theatre. On the whole, the obstacles in the way of such an approach to completeness of interpretation must be acknowledged to be very great, and it is doubtful whether they will be surmounted in Great Britain.

Meanwhile, those who have strong imaginations, even if they have no Greek, may enjoy reading the plays to themselves, and those who are unequal to such an effort, or disinclined for it, may notwithstanding sometimes like to hear them read by another. And in both cases the translator's modest work, in spite of his enemies aforesaid, will have its limited reward.

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JE 10 '69			
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GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.

The Heckman Bindery, Inc.
N. Manchester, Ind.
MAR 1953

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882.09
C15 Campbell, L.
Guide to Greek tragedy

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